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THE WORKS

OF

ALFRED LORD TENNYSON

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ALFRED

LORD TENNYSON

POET LAUREATE

VOL. IX.

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THE FORESTERS

ACT I

SCENE I.—*The garden before* SIR RICHARD LEA'S *castle.*

KATE (*gathering flowers*).

These roses for my Lady Marian; these lilies to lighten Sir Richard's black room, where he sits and eats his heart for want of money to pay the Abbot.

[*Sings.*

The warrior Earl of Allendale,
He loved the Lady Anne;
The lady loved the master well,
The maid she loved the man.

All in the castle garden,
Or ever the day began,
The lady gave a rose to the Earl,
The maid a rose to the man.

'I go to fight in Scotland
With many a savage clan;'
The lady gave her hand to the Earl,
The maid her hand to the man.

'Farewell, farewell, my warrior Earl!'
And ever a tear down ran.
She gave a weeping kiss to the Earl,
And the maid a kiss to the man.

Enter four ragged RETAINERS.

FIRST RETAINER.

You do well, Mistress Kate, to sing and to gather roses. You be fed with tit-bits, you, and we be dogs that have only the bones, till we be only bones our own selves.

KATE.

I am fed with tit-bits no more than you are, but I keep a good heart and make the most of it, and, truth to say, Sir Richard and my Lady Marian fare wellnigh as sparely as their people.

SECOND RETAINER.

And look at our suits, out at knee, out at elbow. We be more like scarecrows in a field than decent serving men; and then, I pray you, look at Robin Earl of Huntingdon's men.

FIRST RETAINER.

She hath looked well at one of 'em, Little John.

THIRD RETAINER.

Ay, how fine they be in their liveries, and each of 'em as full of meat as an egg, and as sleek and as round-about as a mellow codlin.

FOURTH RETAINER.

But I be worse off than any of you, for I be lean by nature, and if you cram me crop-full I be little better than Famine in the picture, but if you starve me I be Gaffer Death himself. I would like to show you, Mistress Kate, how bare and spare I be on the rib: I be lanker than an old horse turned out to die on the common.

KATE.

Spare me thy spare ribs, I pray thee; but now I ask you all, did none of you love young Walter Lea?

FIRST RETAINER.

Ay, if he had not gone to fight the king's battles, we should have better battels at home.

KATE.

Right as an Oxford scholar, but the boy was taken prisoner by the Moors.

FIRST RETAINER.

Ay.

KATE.

And Sir Richard was told he might be ransomed for two thousand marks in gold.

FIRST RETAINER.

Ay.

KATE.

Then he borrowed the monies from the Abbot of York, the Sheriff's brother. And if they be not paid back at the end of the year, the land goes to the Abbot.

FIRST RETAINER.

No news of young Walter?

KATE.

None, nor of the gold, nor the man who took out the gold: but now ye know why we live so stintedly, and why ye have so few grains to peck at. Sir Richard must scrape and scrape till he get to the land again. Come, come, why do ye loiter here? Carry fresh rushes into the dining-hall, for those that are there, they be so greasy, and smell so vilely that my Lady Marian holds her nose when she steps across it.

FOURTH RETAINER.

Why there, now! that very word 'greasy' hath a kind of unction in it, a smack of relish about it. The rats have gnawed 'em already. I pray Heaven we may not have to take to the rushes. [*Exeunt.*

KATE.

Poor fellows!

The lady gave her hand to the Earl,
The maid her hand to the man.

Enter LITTLE JOHN.

LITTLE JOHN.

My master, Robin the Earl, is always a-telling us that every man, for the sake of the great blessed Mother in heaven, and for the love of his own little mother on earth, should handle all womankind gently, and hold them in all honour, and speak small to 'em, and not scare 'em, but go about to come at their love with all manner of homages, and observances, and circumbendibuses.

KATE.

The lady gave a rose to the Earl,
The maid a rose to the man.

LITTLE JOHN (*seeing her*).

O the sacred little thing! What a shape! what lovely arms! A rose to the man! Ay, the man had given her a rose and she gave him another.

KATE.

Shall I keep one little rose for Little John? No.

LITTLE JOHN.

There, there! You see I was right. She hath a tenderness toward me, but is too shy to show it. It is in her, in the woman, and the man must bring it out of her.

KATE.

She gave a weeping kiss to the Earl,
The maid a kiss to the man.

LITTLE JOHN.

Did she? But there I am sure the ballad is at fault. It should have told us how the man first kissed the maid. She doesn't see me. Shall I be bold? shall I touch her? shall I give her the first kiss? O sweet Kate, my first love, the first kiss, the first kiss!

KATE (*turns and kisses him*).

Why lookest thou so amazed?

LITTLE JOHN.

I cannot tell; but I came to give thee the first kiss, and thou hast given it me.

KATE.

But if a man and a maid care for one another, does it matter so much if the maid give the first kiss?

LITTLE JOHN.

I cannot tell, but I had sooner have given thee the first kiss. I was dreaming of it all the way hither.

KATE.

Dream of it, then, all the way back, for now I will have none of it.

LITTLE JOHN.

Nay, now thou hast given me the man's kiss, let me give thee the maid's.

KATE.

If thou draw one inch nearer, I will give thee a buffet on the face.

LITTLE JOHN.

Wilt thou not give me rather the little rose for Little John?

KATE (*throws it down and tramples on it*).

There!

[KATE, *seeing* MARIAN, *exit hurriedly.*

Enter MARIAN (*singing*).

Love flew in at the window
As Wealth walk'd in at the door.
'You have come for you saw Wealth coming,' said I.
But he flutter'd his wings with a sweet little cry,
I'll cleave to you rich or poor.

Wealth dropt out of the window,
Poverty crept thro' the door.
'Well now you would fain follow Wealth,' said I,
But he flutter'd his wings as he gave me the lie,
I cling to you all the more.

LITTLE JOHN.

Thanks, my lady—inasmuch as I am a true believer in true love myself, and your Ladyship hath sung the old proverb out of fashion.

MARIAN.

Ay but thou hast ruffled my woman, Little John. She hath the fire in her face and the dew in her eyes. I believed thee to be too solemn and formal to be a ruffler. Out upon thee!

LITTLE JOHN.

I am no ruffler, my lady; but I pray you, my lady, if a man and a maid love one another, may the maid give the first kiss?

MARIAN.

It will be all the more gracious of her if she do.

LITTLE JOHN.

I cannot tell. Manners be so corrupt, and these are the days of Prince John. [*Exit.*

Enter SIR RICHARD LEA (*reading a bond*).

SIR RICHARD.

Marian!

MARIAN.

Father!

SIR RICHARD.

Who parted from thee even now?

MARIAN.

That strange starched stiff creature, Little John, the Earl's man. He would grapple with a lion like the King, and is flustered by a girl's kiss.

SIR RICHARD.

There never was an Earl so true a friend of the people as Lord Robin of Huntingdon.

MARIAN.

A gallant Earl. I love him as I hate John.

SIR RICHARD.

I fear me he hath wasted his revenues in the service of our good king Richard against the party of John, as I have done, as I have done: and where is Richard?

MARIAN.

Cleave to him, father! he will come home at last.

SIR RICHARD.

I trust he will, but if he do not I and thou are but beggars.

MARIAN.

We will be beggar'd then and be true to the King.

SIR RICHARD.

Thou speakest like a fool or a woman. Canst thou endure to be a beggar whose whole life hath

been folded like a blossom in the sheath, like a careless sleeper in the down; who never hast felt a want, to whom all things, up to this present, have come as freely as heaven's air and mother's milk?

MARIAN.

Tut, father! I am none of your delicate Norman maidens who can only broider and mayhap ride a-hawking with the help of the men. I can bake and I can brew, and by all the saints I can shoot almost as closely with the bow as the great Earl himself. I have played at the foils too with Kate: but is not to-day his birthday?

SIR RICHARD.

Dost thou love him indeed, that thou keepest a record of his birthdays? Thou knowest that the Sheriff of Nottingham loves thee.

MARIAN.

The Sheriff dare to love me? me who worship Robin the great Earl of Huntingdon? I love him as a damsel of his day might have loved Harold the Saxon, or Hereward the Wake. They both fought against the tyranny of the kings, the Normans. But then your Sheriff, your little man, if he dare to fight

at all, would fight for his rents, his leases, his houses, his monies, his oxen, his dinners, himself. Now your great man, your Robin, all England's Robin, fights not for himself but for the people of England. This John—this Norman tyranny—the stream is bearing us all down, and our little Sheriff will ever swim with the stream! but our great man, our Robin, against it. And how often in old histories have the great men striven against the stream, and how often in the long sweep of years to come must the great man strive against it again to save his country, and the liberties of his people! God bless our well-beloved Robin, Earl of Huntingdon.

SIR RICHARD.

Ay, ay. He wore thy colours once at a tourney. I am old and forget. Was Prince John there?

MARIAN.

The Sheriff of Nottingham was there—not John.

SIR RICHARD.

Beware of John and the Sheriff of Nottingham. They hunt in couples, and when they look at a maid they blast her.

MARIAN.

Then the maid is not high-hearted enough.

SIR RICHARD.

There—there—be not a fool again. Their aim is ever at that which flies highest—but O girl, girl, I am almost in despair. Those two thousand marks lent me by the Abbot for the ransom of my son Walter—I believed this Abbot of the party of King Richard, and he hath sold himself to that beast John —they must be paid in a year and a month, or I lose the land. There is one that should be grateful to me overseas, a Count in Brittany—he lives near Quimper. I saved his life once in battle. He has monies. I will go to him. I saved him. I will try him. I am all but sure of him. I will go to him.

MARIAN.

And I will follow thee, and God help us both.

SIR RICHARD.

Child, thou shouldst marry one who will pay the mortgage. This Robin, this Earl of Huntingdon—he is a friend of Richard—I know not, but he may save the land, he may save the land.

MARIAN (*showing a cross hung round her neck*).

Father, you see this cross?

SIR RICHARD.

Ay the King, thy godfather, gave it thee when a baby.

MARIAN.

And he said that whenever I married he would give me away, and on this cross I have sworn [*kisses it*] that till I myself pass away, there is no other man that shall give me away.

SIR RICHARD.

Lo there—thou art fool again—I am all as loyal as thyself, but what a vow! what a vow!

Re-enter LITTLE JOHN.

LITTLE JOHN.

My Lady Marian, your woman so flustered me that I forgot my message from the Earl. To-day he hath accomplished his thirtieth birthday, and he prays your ladyship and your ladyship's father to be present at his banquet to-night.

MARIAN.

Say, we will come.

LITTLE JOHN.

And I pray you, my lady, to stand between me and your woman, Kate.

MARIAN.

I will speak with her.

LITTLE JOHN.

I thank you, my lady, and I wish you and your ladyship's father a most exceedingly good morning.

[*Exit.*

SIR RICHARD.

Thou hast answered for me, but I know not if I will let thee go.

MARIAN.

I mean to go.

SIR RICHARD.

Not if I barred thee up in thy chamber, like a bird in a cage.

MARIAN.

Then I would drop from the casement, like a spider.

SIR RICHARD.

But I would hoist the drawbridge, like thy master.

MARIAN.

And I would swim the moat, like an otter.

SIR RICHARD.

But I would set my men-at-arms to oppose thee, like the Lord of the Castle.

MARIAN.

And I would break through them all, like the King of England.

SIR RICHARD.

Well, thou shalt go, but O the land! the land! my great great great grandfather, my great great grandfather, my great grandfather, my grandfather and my own father—they were born and bred on it—it was their mother—they have trodden it for half a thousand years, and whenever I set my own foot on it I say to it, Thou art mine, and it answers, I am thine to the very heart of the earth—but now I have lost my gold, I have lost my son, and I shall lose my land also. Down to the devil with this bond that beggars me! [*Flings down the bond.*

MARIAN.

Take it again, dear father, be not wroth at the dumb parchment. Sufficient for the day, dear father! let us be merry to-night at the banquet.

SCENE II.—*A hall in the house of* ROBIN HOOD *the Earl of Huntingdon. Doors open into a banqueting-hall where he is at feast with his friends.*

DRINKING SONG.

Long live Richard,
Robin and Richard!
Long live Richard!
Down with John!
Drink to the Lion-heart
Every one!
Pledge the Plantagenet,
Him that is gone.
Who knows whither?
God's good Angel
Help him back hither,
And down with John!
Long live Robin,
Robin and Richard!
Long live Robin,
And down with John!

Enter PRINCE JOHN *disguised as a monk and the* SHERIFF OF NOTTINGHAM. *Cries of* '*Down with John*,' '*Long live King Richard*,' '*Down with John.*'

PRINCE JOHN.

Down with John! ha. Shall I be known? is my disguise perfect?

SHERIFF.

Perfect—who should know you for Prince John, so that you keep the cowl down and speak not?

[*Shouts from the banquet-room.*

PRINCE JOHN.

Thou and I will still these revelries presently.

[*Shouts*, 'Long live King Richard!'

I come here to see this daughter of Sir Richard of the Lea and if her beauties answer their report. If so—

SHERIFF.

If so— [*Shouts*, 'Down with John!'

PRINCE JOHN.

You hear!

SHERIFF.

Yes, my lord, fear not. I will answer for you.

Enter LITTLE JOHN, SCARLET, MUCH, *&c.*, *from the banquet singing a snatch of the Drinking Song.*

LITTLE JOHN.

I am a silent man myself, and all the more wonder at our Earl. What a wealth of words—O Lord, I will live and die for King Richard—not so much for the cause as for the Earl. O Lord, I am easily led by words, but I think the Earl hath right. Scarlet, hath not the Earl right? What makes thee so down in the mouth?

SCARLET.

I doubt not, I doubt not, and though I be down in the mouth, I will swear by the head of the Earl.

LITTLE JOHN.

Thou Much, miller's son, hath not the Earl right?

MUCH.

More water goes by the mill than the miller wots of, and more goes to make right than I know of, but for all that I will swear the Earl hath right. But they are coming hither for the dance—

Enter FRIAR TUCK.

be they not, Friar Tuck? Thou art the Earl's confessor and shouldst know.

TUCK.

Ay, ay, and but that I am a man of weight, and the weight of the church to boot on my shoulders, I would dance too. Fa, la, la, fa, la, la. [*Capering.*

MUCH.

But doth not the weight of the flesh at odd times overbalance the weight of the church, ha friar?

TUCK.

Homo sum. I love my dinner—but I can fast, I can fast; and as to other frailties of the flesh—out upon thee! Homo sum, sed virgo sum, I am a virgin, my masters, I am a virgin.

MUCH.

And a virgin, my masters, three yards about the waist is like to remain a virgin, for who could embrace such an armful of joy?

TUCK.

Knave, there is a lot of wild fellows in Sherwood Forest who hold by King Richard. If ever I meet thee there, I will break thy sconce with my quarter-staff.

Enter from the banqueting-hall SIR RICHARD LEA, ROBIN HOOD, *&c.*

ROBIN.

My guests and friends, Sir Richard, all of you
Who deign to honour this my thirtieth year,
And some of you were prophets that I might be
Now that the sun our King is gone, the light
Of these dark hours; but this new moon, I fear,
Is darkness. Nay, this may be the last time
When I shall hold my birthday in this hall:
I may be outlaw'd, I have heard a rumour.

ALL.

God forbid!

ROBIN.

Nay, but we have no news of Richard yet,
And ye did wrong in crying 'Down with John;'
For be he dead, then John may be our King.

ALL.

God forbid!

ROBIN.

Ay God forbid,
But if it be so we must bear with John.

The man is able enough—no lack of wit,
And apt at arms and shrewd in policy.
Courteous enough too when he wills; and yet
I hate him for his want of chivalry.
He that can pluck the flower of maidenhood
From off the stalk and trample it in the mire,
And boast that he hath trampled it. I hate him,
I hate the man. I may not hate the King
For aught I know,
So that our Barons bring his baseness under.
I think they will be mightier than the king.

[*Dance music.*

(MARIAN *enters with other damsels.*)

ROBIN.

The high Heaven guard thee from his wantonness,
Who art the fairest flower of maidenhood
That ever blossom'd on this English isle.

MARIAN.

Cloud not thy birthday with one fear for me.
My lord, myself and my good father pray
Thy thirtieth summer may be thirty-fold
As happy as any of those that went before.

ROBIN.

My Lady Marian you can make it so
If you will deign to tread a measure with me.

MARIAN.

Full willingly, my lord.

[*They dance.*

ROBIN (*after dance*).

My Lady, will you answer me a question?

MARIAN.

Any that you may ask.

ROBIN.

A question that every true man asks of a woman once in his life.

MARIAN.

I will not answer it, my lord, till King Richard come home again.

PRINCE JOHN (*to* SHERIFF).

How she looks up at him, how she holds her face!
Now if she kiss him, I will have his head.

SHERIFF.

Peace, my lord; the Earl and Sir Richard come this way.

ROBIN.

Must you have these monies before the year and the month end?

SIR RICHARD.

Or I forfeit my land to the Abbot. I must pass overseas to one that I trust will help me.

ROBIN.

Leaving your fair Marian alone here.

SIR RICHARD.

Ay, for she hath somewhat of the lioness in her, and there be men-at-arms to guard her.

[ROBIN, SIR RICHARD, *and* MARIAN *pass on.*

PRINCE JOHN (*to* SHERIFF).

Why that will be our opportunity
When I and thou will rob the nest of her.

SHERIFF.

Good Prince, art thou in need of any gold?

PRINCE JOHN.

Gold? why? not now.

SHERIFF.

I would give thee any gold
So that myself alone might rob the nest.

PRINCE JOHN.

Well, well then, thou shalt rob the nest alone.

SHERIFF.

Swear to me by that relic on thy neck.

PRINCE JOHN.

I swear then by this relic on my neck—
No, no, I will not swear by this; I keep it
For holy vows made to the blessed Saints
Not pleasures, women's matters.
Dost thou mistrust me? Am I not thy friend?
Beware, man, lest thou lose thy faith in me.
I love thee much; and as I *am* thy friend,
I promise thee to make this Marian thine.
Go now and ask the maid to dance with thee,
And learn from her if she do love this Earl.

SHERIFF (*advancing toward* MARIAN *and* ROBIN).

Pretty mistress!

ROBIN.

What art thou, man? Sheriff of Nottingham?

SHERIFF.

Ay, my lord. I and my friend, this monk, were here belated, and seeing the hospitable lights in your castle, and knowing the fame of your hospitality, we ventured in uninvited.

ROBIN.

You are welcome, though I fear you be of those who hold more by John than Richard.

SHERIFF.

True, for through John I had my sheriffship. I am John's till Richard come back again, and then I am Richard's. Pretty mistress, will you dance?

[*They dance.*

ROBIN (*talking to* PRINCE JOHN).

What monk of what convent art thou? Why wearest thou thy cowl to hide thy face?

[PRINCE JOHN *shakes his head.*

Is he deaf, or dumb, or daft, or drunk belike?

[PRINCE JOHN *shakes his head.*

Why comest thou like a death's head at my feast?

[PRINCE JOHN *points to the* SHERIFF,
who is dancing with MARIAN.

Is he thy mouthpiece, thine interpreter?

[PRINCE JOHN *nods.*

SHERIFF (*to* MARIAN *as they pass*).

Beware of John!

MARIAN.

I hate him.

SHERIFF.

Would you cast
An eye of favour on me, I would pay
My brother all his debt and save the land.

MARIAN.

I cannot answer thee till Richard come.

SHERIFF.

And when he comes?

MARIAN.

Well, you must wait till then.

LITTLE JOHN (*dancing with* KATE).

Is it made up? Will you kiss me?

KATE.

You shall give me the first kiss.

LITTLE JOHN.

There (*kisses her*). Now thine.

KATE.

You shall wait for mine till Sir Richard has paid the Abbot. [*They pass on.*

[*The* SHERIFF *leaves* MARIAN *with her father and comes toward* ROBIN.

ROBIN (*to* SHERIFF, PRINCE JOHN *standing by*).

Sheriff, thy friend, this monk, is but a statue.

SHERIFF.

Pardon him, my lord: he is a holy Palmer, bounden by a vow not to show his face, nor to speak word to anyone, till he join King Richard in the Holy Land.

ROBIN.

Going to the Holy Land to Richard! Give me thy hand and tell him—— Why, what a cold grasp is thine—as if thou didst repent thy courtesy even in the doing it. That is no true man's hand. I hate hidden faces.

SHERIFF.

Pardon him again, I pray you; but the twilight of the coming day already glimmers in the east. We thank you, and farewell.

ROBIN.

Farewell, farewell. I hate hidden faces.

[*Exeunt* PRINCE JOHN *and* SHERIFF.

SIR RICHARD (*coming forward with* MAID MARIAN).

How close the Sheriff peer'd into thine eyes!
What did he say to thee?

MARIAN.

Bade me beware
Of John: what maid but would beware of John?

SIR RICHARD.

What else?

MARIAN.

I care not what he said.

SIR RICHARD.

What else?

MARIAN.

That if I cast an eye of favour on him,
Himself would pay this mortgage to his brother,
And save the land.

SIR RICHARD.

Did he say so, the Sheriff?

ROBIN.

I fear this Abbot is a heart of flint,
Hard as the stones of his abbey.
O good Sir Richard,
I am sorry my exchequer runs so low
I cannot help you in this exigency;
For though my men and I flash out at times
Of festival like burnish'd summer-flies,
We make but one hour's buzz, are only like
The rainbow of a momentary sun.
I am mortgaged as thyself.

SIR RICHARD.

Ay! I warrant thee—thou canst not be sorrier than I am. Come away, daughter.

ROBIN.

Farewell, Sir Richard; farewell, sweet Marian.

MARIAN.

Till better times.

ROBIN.

But if the better times should never come?

MARIAN.

Then I shall be no worse.

ROBIN.

And if the worst time come?

MARIAN.

Why then I will be better than the time.

ROBIN.

This ring my mother gave me: it was her own
Betrothal ring. She pray'd me when I loved
A maid with all my heart to pass it down
A finger of that hand which should be mine
Thereafter. Will you have it? Will you wear it?

MARIAN.

Ay, noble Earl, and never part with it.

SIR RICHARD LEA (*coming up*).

Not till she clean forget thee, noble Earl.

MARIAN.

Forget *him*—never—by this Holy Cross
Which good King Richard gave me when a child—
Never!

Not while the swallow skims along the ground,
And while the lark flies up and touches heaven!
Not while the smoke floats from the cottage roof,
And the white cloud is roll'd along the sky!
Not while the rivulet babbles by the door,
And the great breaker beats upon the beach!
Never—
Till Nature, high and low, and great and small
Forgets herself, and all her loves and hates
Sink again into chaos.

SIR RICHARD LEA.

Away! away!

[*Exeunt to music.*

SCENE III.—*Same as Scene II.*

ROBIN *and his men.*

ROBIN.

All gone!—my ring—I am happy—should be happy.
She took my ring. I trust she loves me—yet
I heard this Sheriff tell her he would pay
The mortgage if she favour'd him. I fear
Not her, the father's power upon her.
Friends, (*to his men*)
I am only merry for an hour or two

Upon a birthday: if this life of ours
Be a good glad thing, why should we make us merry
Because a year of it is gone? but Hope
Smiles from the threshold of the year to come
Whispering 'it will be happier,' and old faces
Press round us, and warm hands close with warm hands,
And thro' the blood the wine leaps to the brain
Like April sap to the topmost tree, that shoots
New buds to heaven, whereon the throstle rock'd
Sings a new song to the new year—and you
Strike up a song, my friends, and then to bed.

LITTLE JOHN.

What will you have, my lord?

ROBIN.

'To sleep! to sleep!'

LITTLE JOHN.

There is a touch of sadness in it, my lord,
But ill befitting such a festal day.

ROBIN.

I have a touch of sadness in myself.
Sing.

SONG.

To sleep! to sleep! The long bright day is done,
And darkness rises from the fallen sun.
To sleep! to sleep!
Whate'er thy joys, they vanish with the day;
Whate'er thy griefs, in sleep they fade away.
To sleep! to sleep!
Sleep, mournful heart, and let the past be past!
Sleep, happy soul! all life will sleep at last.
To sleep! to sleep!

[*A trumpet blown at the gates.*

ROBIN.

Who breaks the stillness of the morning thus?

LITTLE JOHN (*going out and returning*).

It is a royal messenger, my lord:
I trust he brings us news of the King's coming.

Enter a PURSUIVANT *who reads.*

O yes, O yes, O yes! In the name of the Regent. Thou, Robin Hood Earl of Huntingdon, art attainted and hast lost thine earldom of Huntingdon. Moreover thou art dispossessed of all thy lands, goods, and chattels; and by virtue of this writ, whereas

Robin Hood Earl of Huntingdon by force and arms hath trespassed against the king in divers manners, therefore by the judgment of the officers of the said lord king, according to the law and custom of the kingdom of England Robin Hood Earl of Huntingdon is outlawed and banished.

ROBIN.

I have shelter'd some that broke the forest laws.
This is irregular and the work of John.

['Irregular, irregular! (*tumult*) Down with him, tear his coat from his back!'

MESSENGER.

Ho there! ho there, the Sheriff's men without!

ROBIN.

Nay, let them be, man, let them be. We yield.
How should we cope with John? The London folkmote
Has made him all but king, and he hath seized
On half the royal castles. Let him alone! (*to his men*)
A worthy messenger! how should he help it?
Shall *we* too work injustice? what, thou shakest!
Here, here—a cup of wine—drink and begone!

[*Exit* MESSENGER.

We will away in four-and-twenty hours,
But shall we leave our England?

TUCK.

Robin, Earl—

ROBIN.

Let be the Earl. Henceforth I am no more
Than plain man to plain man.

TUCK.

Well, then, plain man,
There be good fellows there in merry Sherwood
That hold by Richard, tho' they kill his deer.

ROBIN.

In Sherwood Forest. I have heard of them.
Have they no leader?

TUCK.

Each man for his own.
Be thou their leader and they will all of them
Swarm to thy voice like bees to the brass pan.

ROBIN.

They hold by Richard—the wild wood! to cast
All threadbare household habit, mix with all

The lusty life of wood and underwood,
Hawk, buzzard, jay, the mavis and the merle,
The tawny squirrel vaulting thro' the boughs,
The deer, the highback'd polecat, the wild boar,
The burrowing badger—By St. Nicholas
I have a sudden passion for the wild wood—
We should be free as air in the wild wood—
What say you? shall we go? Your hands, your hands!
[*Gives his hand to each.*
You, Scarlet, you are always moody here.

SCARLET.

'Tis for no lack of love to you, my lord,
But lack of happiness in a blatant wife.
She broke my head on Tuesday with a dish.
I would have thwack'd the woman, but I did not,
Because thou sayest such fine things of women
But I shall have to thwack her if I stay.

ROBIN.

Would it be better for thee in the wood?

SCARLET.

Ay, so she did not follow me to the wood.

ROBIN.

Then, Scarlet, thou at least wilt go with me.
Thou, Much, the miller's son, I knew thy father:

He was a manly man, as thou art, Much,
And gray before his time as thou art, Much.

MUCH.

It is the trick of the family, my lord.
There was a song he made to the turning wheel—

ROBIN.

'Turn! turn!' but I forget it.

MUCH.

I can sing it.

ROBIN.

Not now, good Much! And thou, dear Little John,
Who hast that worship for me which Heaven knows
I ill deserve—you love me, all of you,
But I am outlaw'd, and if caught, I die.
Your hands again. All thanks for all your service;
But if you follow me, you may die with me.

ALL.

We will live and die with thee, we will live and die with thee.

END OF ACT I.

ACT II

THE FLIGHT OF MARIAN

ACT II

SCENE I.—*A broad forest glade, woodman's hut at one side with half-door.* FORESTERS *are looking to their bows and arrows, or polishing their swords.*

FORESTERS *sing* (*as they disperse to their work*).

There is no land like England
Where'er the light of day be;
There are no hearts like English hearts
Such hearts of oak as they be.
There is no land like England
Where'er the light of day be;
There are no men like Englishmen
So tall and bold as they be.

(Full chorus.) *And these will strike for England*
And man and maid be free
To foil and spoil the tyrant
Beneath the greenwood tree.

There is no land like England
Where'er the light of day be;
There are no wives like English wives
So fair and chaste as they be.
There is no land like England
Where'er the light of day be;
There are no maids like English maids
So beautiful as they be.

(Full chorus.) *And these shall wed with freemen,*
And all their sons be free
To sing the songs of England
Beneath the greenwood tree.

ROBIN (*alone*).

My lonely hour!
The king of day hath stept from off his throne,
Flung by the golden mantle of the cloud,
And sets, a naked fire. The King of England
Perchance this day may sink as gloriously,

Red with his own and enemy's blood—but no!
We hear he is in prison. It is my birthday.
I have reign'd one year in the wild wood. My mother,
For whose sake, and the blessed Queen of Heaven,
I reverence all women, bad me, dying,
Whene'er this day should come about, to carve
One lone hour from it, so to meditate
Upon my greater nearness to the birthday
Of the after-life, when all the sheeted dead
Are shaken from their stillness in the grave
By the last trumpet.
Am I worse or better?
I am outlaw'd. I am none the worse for that.
I held for Richard, and I hated John.
I am a thief, ay, and a king of thieves.
Ay! but we rob the robber, wrong the wronger,
And what we wring from them we give the poor.
I am none the worse for that, and all the better
For this free forest-life, for while I sat
Among my thralls in my baronial hall
The groining hid the heavens; but since I breathed,
A houseless head beneath the sun and stars,
The soul of the woods hath stricken thro' my blood,
The love of freedom, the desire of God,
The hope of larger life hereafter, more
Tenfold than under roof. [*Horn blown.*
True, were I taken

They would prick out my sight. A price is set
On this poor head; but I believe there lives
No man who truly loves and truly rules
His following, but can keep his followers true.
I am one with mine. Traitors are rarely bred
Save under traitor kings. Our vice-king John,
True king of vice—true play on words—our John
By his Norman arrogance and dissoluteness,
Hath made *me* king of all the discontent
Of England up thro' all the forest land
North to the Tyne: being outlaw'd in a land
Where law lies dead, we make ourselves the law.
Why break you thus upon my lonely hour?

Enter LITTLE JOHN *and* KATE.

LITTLE JOHN.

I found this white doe wandering thro' the wood,
Not thine, but mine. I have shot her thro' the heart.

KATE.

He lies, my lord. I have shot *him* thro' the heart.

ROBIN.

My God, thou art the very woman who waits
On my dear Marian. Tell me, tell me of her.
Thou comest a very angel out of heaven.
Where is she? and how fares she?

KATE.

O my good lord,
I am but an angel by reflected light.
Your heaven is vacant of your angel. John—
Shame on him!—
Stole on her, she was walking in the garden,
And after some slight speech about the Sheriff
He caught her round the waist, whereon she struck him,
And fled into the castle. She and Sir Richard
Have past away, I know not where; and I
Was left alone, and knowing as I did
That I had shot him thro' the heart, I came
To eat him up and make an end of him.

LITTLE JOHN.

In kisses?

KATE.

You, how dare you mention kisses?
But I am weary pacing thro' the wood.
Show me some cave or cabin where I may rest.

ROBIN.

Go with him. I will talk with thee anon.

[*Exeunt* LITTLE JOHN *and* KATE.

She struck him, my brave Marian, struck the Prince,
The serpent that had crept into the garden

And coil'd himself about her sacred waist.
I think I should have stricken him to the death.
He never will forgive her.
O the Sheriff
Would pay this cursed mortgage to his brother
If Marian would marry him; and the son
Is most like dead—if so the land may come
To Marian, and they rate the land five-fold
The worth of the mortgage, and who marries her
Marries the land. Most honourable Sheriff!
(*Passionately*) Gone, and it may be gone for evermore!
O would that I could see her for a moment
Glide like a light across these woodland ways!
Tho' in one moment she should glance away,
I should be happier for it all the year.
O would she moved beside me like my shadow!
O would she stood before me as my queen,
To make this Sherwood Eden o'er again,
And these rough oaks the palms of Paradise!

Ah! but who be those three yonder with bows?—not of my band—the Sheriff, and by heaven, Prince John himself and one of those mercenaries that suck the blood of England. My people are all scattered I know not where. Have they come for me? Here is the witch's hut. The fool-people call her a witch—a good witch to me! I will shelter here.

[*Knocks at the door of the hut.*

OLD WOMAN *comes out.*

OLD WOMAN (*kisses his hand*).

Ah dear Robin! ah noble captain, friend of the poor!

ROBIN.

I am chased by my foes. I have forgotten my horn that calls my men together. Disguise me—thy gown and thy coif.

OLD WOMAN.

Come in, come in; I would give my life for thee, for when the Sheriff had taken all our goods for the King without paying, our horse and our little cart——

ROBIN.

Quick, good mother, quick!

OLD WOMAN.

Ay, ay, gown, coif, and petticoat, and the old woman's blessing with them to the last fringe.

[*They go in.*

Enter PRINCE JOHN, SHERIFF OF NOTTINGHAM, *and* MERCENARY.

PRINCE JOHN.

Did we not hear the two would pass this way?
They must have past. Here is a woodman's hut.

MERCENARY.

Take heed, take heed! in Nottingham they say
There bides a foul witch somewhere hereabout.

SHERIFF.

Not in this hut I take it.

PRINCE JOHN.

Why not here?

SHERIFF.

I saw a man go in, my lord.

PRINCE JOHN.

Not two?

SHERIFF.

No, my lord, one.

PRINCE JOHN.

Make for the cottage then!

Interior of the hut.

ROBIN *disguised as old woman.*

PRINCE JOHN (*without*).

Knock again! knock again!

ROBIN (*to* OLD WOMAN).

Get thee into the closet there, and make a ghostly wail ever and anon to scare 'em.

OLD WOMAN.

I will, I will, good Robin. [*Goes into closet.*

PRINCE JOHN (*without*).

Open, open, or I will drive the door from the doorpost.

ROBIN (*opens door*).

Come in, come in.

PRINCE JOHN.

Why did ye keep us at the door so long?

ROBIN (*curtseying*).

I was afear'd it was the ghost, your worship.

PRINCE JOHN.

Ghost! did one in white pass?

ROBIN (*curtseying*).

No, your worship.

PRINCE JOHN.

Did two knights pass?

ROBIN (*curtseying*).

No, your worship.

SHERIFF.

I fear me we have lost our labour, then.

PRINCE JOHN.

Except this old hag have been bribed to lie.

ROBIN.

We old hags should be bribed to speak truth, for, God help us, we lie by nature.

PRINCE JOHN.

There was a man just now that enter'd here?

ROBIN.

There is but one old woman in the hut.

[OLD WOMAN *yells.*

ROBIN.

I crave your worship's pardon. There is yet another old woman. She was murdered here a hundred year ago, and whenever a murder is to be done again she yells out i' this way—so they say, your worship.

MERCENARY.

Now, if I hadn't a sprig o' wickentree sewn into my dress, I should run.

PRINCE JOHN.

Tut! tut! the scream of some wild woodland thing.
How came we to be parted from our men?
We shouted, and *they* shouted, as I thought,
But shout and echo play'd into each other
So hollowly we knew not which was which.

ROBIN.

The wood is full of echoes, owls, elfs, ouphes, oafs, ghosts o' the mist, wills-o'-the-wisp; only they that be bred in it can find their way a-nights in it.

PRINCE JOHN.

I am footsore and famish'd therewithal.
Is there aught there? [*Pointing to cupboard.*

ROBIN.

Naught for the likes o' you.

PRINCE JOHN.

Speak straight out, crookback.

ROBIN.

Sour milk and black bread.

PRINCE JOHN.

Well, set them forth. I could eat anything.

[*He sets out a table with black bread.*

This is mere marble. Old hag, how should thy one tooth drill thro' this?

ROBIN.

Nay, by St. Gemini, I ha' two; and since the Sheriff left me naught but an empty belly, they can meet upon anything thro' a millstone. You gentles that live upo' manchet-bread and marchpane, what should you know o' the food o' the poor? Look you here, before you can eat it you must hack it with a hatchet, break it all to pieces, as you break the poor, as you would hack at Robin Hood if you could light upon him (*hacks it and flings two pieces*). There's for you, and there's for you—and the old woman's welcome.

PRINCE JOHN.

The old wretch is mad, and her bread is beyond me: and the milk—faugh! Hast thou anything to sweeten this?

ROBIN.

Here's a pot o' wild honey from an old oak, saving your sweet reverences.

SHERIFF.

Thou hast a cow then, hast thou?

ROBIN.

Ay, for when the Sheriff took my little horse for the King without paying for it——

SHERIFF.

How hadst thou then the means to buy a cow?

ROBIN.

Eh, I would ha' given my whole body to the King had *he* asked for it, like the woman at Acre when the Turk shot her as she was helping to build the mound against the city. I ha' served the King living, says she, and let me serve him dead, says she; let me go to make the mound: bury me in the mound, says the woman.

SHERIFF.

Ay, but the cow?

ROBIN.

She was given me.

SHERIFF.

By whom?

ROBIN.

By a thief.

SHERIFF.

Who, woman, who?

ROBIN (*sings*).

He was a forester good;
He was the cock o' the walk;
He was the king o' the wood.

Your worship may find another rhyme if you care to drag your brains for such a minnow.

SHERIFF.

That cow was mine. I have lost a cow from my meadow. Robin Hood was it? I thought as much. He will come to the gibbet at last.

[OLD WOMAN *yells.*

MERCENARY.

O sweet sir, talk not of cows. You anger the spirit.

PRINCE JOHN.

Anger the scritch-owl.

MERCENARY.

But, my lord, the scritch-owl bodes death, my lord.

ROBIN.

I beseech you all to speak lower. Robin may be hard by wi' three-score of his men. He often looks in here by the moonshine. Beware of Robin.

[OLD WOMAN *yells.*

MERCENARY.

Ay, do you hear? There may be murder done.

SHERIFF.

Have you not finished, my lord?

ROBIN.

Thou hast crost him in love, and I have heard him swear he will be even wi' thee.

[OLD WOMAN *yells.*

MERCENARY.

Now is my heart so down in my heels that if I stay, I can't run.

SHERIFF.

Shall we not go?

ROBIN.

And, old hag tho' I be, I can spell the hand. Give me thine. Ay, ay, the line o' life is marked enow; but look, there is a cross line o' sudden death.

I pray thee go, go, for tho' thou wouldst bar me fro' the milk o' my cow, I wouldn't have thy blood on my hearth.

PRINCE JOHN.

Why do you listen, man, to the old fool?

SHERIFF.

I will give thee a silver penny if thou wilt show us the way back to Nottingham.

ROBIN (*with a very low curtsey*).

All the sweet saints bless your worship for your alms to the old woman! but make haste then, and be silent in the wood. Follow me.

[*Takes his bow.*

(*They come out of the hut and close the door carefully.*)

Outside hut.

ROBIN.

Softly! softly! there may be a thief in every bush.

PRINCE JOHN.

How should this old lamester guide us? Where is thy goodman?

ROBIN.

The saints were so kind to both on us that he was dead before he was born.

PRINCE JOHN.

Half-witted and a witch to boot! Mislead us, and I will have thy life! and what doest thou with that who art more bow-bent than the very bow thou carriest?

ROBIN.

I keep it to kill nightingales.

PRINCE JOHN.

Nightingales!

ROBIN.

You see, they are so fond o' their own voices that I cannot sleep o' nights by cause on 'em.

PRINCE JOHN.

True soul of the Saxon churl for whom song has no charm.

ROBIN.

Then I roast 'em, for I have nought else to live on (*whines*). O your honour, I pray you too to give me an alms. (*To* PRINCE JOHN.)

SHERIFF.

This is no bow to hit nightingales; this is a true woodman's bow of the best yew-wood to slay the deer. Look, my lord, there goes one in the moonlight. Shoot!

PRINCE JOHN (*shoots*).

Missed! There goes another. Shoot, Sheriff!

SHERIFF (*shoots*).

Missed!

ROBIN.

And here comes another. Why, an old woman can shoot closer than you two.

PRINCE JOHN.

Shoot then, and if thou miss I will fasten thee to thine own doorpost and make thine old carcase a target for us three.

ROBIN (*raises himself upright, shoots, and hits*).

Hit! Did I not tell you an old woman could shoot better?

PRINCE JOHN.

Thou standest straight. Thou speakest manlike. Thou art no old woman—thou art disguised—thou art one of the thieves.

[*Makes a clutch at the gown, which comes in pieces and falls, showing* ROBIN *in his forester's dress.*

SHERIFF.

It is the very captain of the thieves!

PRINCE JOHN.

We have him at last; we have him at advantage. Strike, Sheriff! Strike, mercenary!

[*They draw swords and attack him; he defends himself with his.*

Enter LITTLE JOHN.

LITTLE JOHN.

I have lodged my pretty Katekin in her bower. How now? Clashing of swords—three upon one, and that one our Robin! Rogues, have you no manhood? [*Draws and defends* ROBIN.

Enter SIR RICHARD LEA (*draws his sword*).

SIR RICHARD LEA.

Old as I am, I will not brook to see
Three upon two.

[MAID MARIAN *in the armour of a Redcross Knight follows, half unsheathing her sword and half-seen.*

Back! back! I charge thee, back!
Is this a game for thee to play at? Away.

[*She retires to the fringe of the copse. He fights on* ROBIN'S *side. The other three are beaten off and exeunt.*

Enter FRIAR TUCK.

FRIAR TUCK.

I am too late then with my quarterstaff!

ROBIN.

Quick, friar, follow them:
See whether there be more of 'em in the wood.

FRIAR TUCK.

On the gallop, on the gallop, Robin, like a deer from a dog, or a colt from a gad-fly, or a stump-tailed ox in May-time, or the cow that jumped over the moon. [*Exit.*

ROBIN.

Nay, nay, but softly, lest they spy thee, friar!
[*To* SIR RICHARD LEA *who reels.*
Take thou mine arm. Who art thou, gallant knight?

SIR RICHARD.

Robin, I am Sir Richard of the Lea.
Who be those three that I have fought withal?

ROBIN.

Prince John, the Sheriff, and a mercenary.

SIR RICHARD.

Prince John again. We are flying from this John.
The Sheriff—I am grieved it was the Sheriff;
For, Robin, he must be my son-in-law.
Thou art an outlaw, and couldst never pay
The mortgage on my land. Thou wilt not see
My Marian more. So—so—I have presumed
Beyond my strength. Give me a draught of wine.

[MARIAN *comes forward.*

This is my son but late escaped from prison,
For whom I ran into my debt to the Abbot,
Two thousand marks in gold. I have paid him half.
That other thousand—shall I ever pay it?
A draught of wine.

ROBIN.

Our cellar is hard by.
Take him, good Little John, and give him wine.

[*Exit* SIR RICHARD *leaning on* LITTLE JOHN.

A brave old fellow but he angers me.

[*To* MAID MARIAN *who is following her father.*

Young Walter, nay, I pray thee, stay a moment.

MARIAN.

A moment for some matter of no moment!
Well—take and use your moment, while you may.

ROBIN.

Thou art her brother, and her voice is thine,

Her face is thine, and if thou be as gentle
Give me some news of my sweet Marian.
Where is she?

MARIAN.

Thy sweet Marian? I believe
She came with me into the forest here.

ROBIN.

She follow'd thee into the forest here?

MARIAN.

Nay—that, my friend, I am sure I did not say.

ROBIN.

Thou blowest hot and cold. Where is she then?

MARIAN.

Is she not here with thee?

ROBIN.

Would God she were!

MARIAN.

If not with thee I know not where she is.
She may have lighted on your fairies here,
And now be skipping in their fairy-rings,
And capering hand in hand with Oberon.

ROBIN.

Peace!

MARIAN.

Or learning witchcraft of your woodland witch,
And how to charm and waste the hearts of men.

ROBIN.

That is not brother-like.

MARIAN (*pointing to the sky*).

Or there perchance
Up yonder with the man i' the moon.

ROBIN.

No more!

MARIAN.

Or haply fallen a victim to the wolf.

ROBIN.

Tut! be there wolves in Sherwood?

MARIAN.

The wolf, John!

ROBIN.

Curse him! but thou art mocking me. Thou art
Her brother—I forgive thee. Come be thou
My brother too. She loves me.

MARIAN.

Doth she so?

ROBIN.

Do you doubt me when I say she loves me, man?

MARIAN.

No, but my father will not lose his land,
Rather than that would wed her with the Sheriff.

ROBIN.

Thou hold'st with him?

MARIAN.

Yes, in some sort I do.
He is old and almost mad to keep the land.

ROBIN.

Thou hold'st with him?

MARIAN.

I tell thee, in some sort.

ROBIN (*angrily*).

Sort! sort! what sort? what sort of man art thou
For land, not love? Thou wilt inherit the land,
And so wouldst sell thy sister to the Sheriff,

O thou unworthy brother of my dear Marian!
And now, I do bethink me, thou wast by
And never drewest sword to help the old man
When he was fighting.

MARIAN.

There were three to three.

ROBIN.

Thou shouldst have ta'en his place, and fought for him.

MARIAN.

He did it so well there was no call for me.

ROBIN.

My God!
That such a brother—*she* marry the Sheriff!
Come now, I fain would have a bout with thee.
It is but pastime—nay, I will not harm thee.
Draw!

MARIAN.

Earl, I would fight with any man but thee.

ROBIN.

Ay, ay, because I have a name for prowess.

MARIAN.

It is not that.

ROBIN.

That! I believe thou fell'st into the hands
Of these same Moors thro' nature's baseness, criedst
'I yield' almost before the thing was ask'd,
And thro' thy lack of manhood hast betray'd
Thy father to the losing of his land.
Come, boy! 'tis but to see if thou canst fence.
Draw! [*Draws.*

MARIAN.

No, Sir Earl, I will not fight to-day.

ROBIN.

To-morrow then?

MARIAN.

Well, I will fight to-morrow.

ROBIN.

Give me thy glove upon it.

MARIAN (*pulls off her glove and gives it to him*).

There!

ROBIN.

O God!
What sparkles in the moonlight on thy hand?
[*Takes her hand.*

In that great heat to wed her to the Sheriff
Thou hast robb'd my girl of her betrothal ring.

MARIAN.

No, no!

ROBIN.

What! do I not know mine own ring?

MARIAN.

I keep it for her.

ROBIN.

Nay, she swore it never
Should leave her finger. Give it me, by heaven,
Or I will force it from thee.

MARIAN.

O Robin, Robin!

ROBIN.

O my dear Marian,
Is it thou? is it thou? I fall before thee, clasp
Thy knees. I am ashamed. Thou shalt not marry
The Sheriff, but abide with me who love thee.
[*She moves from him, the moonlight falls upon her.*
O look! before the shadow of these dark oaks
Thou seem'st a saintly splendour out from heaven,

Clothed with the mystic silver of her moon.
Speak but one word not only of forgiveness,
But to show thou art mortal.

MARIAN.

Mortal enough,
If love for thee be mortal. Lovers hold
True love immortal. Robin, tho' I love thee,
We cannot come together in this world.
Not mortal! after death, if after death——

ROBIN (*springing up*).

Life, life. I know not death. Why do you vex me
With raven-croaks of death and after death?

MARIAN.

And I and he are passing overseas:
He has a friend there will advance the monies,
So now the forest lawns are all as bright
As ways to heaven, I pray thee give us guides
To lead us thro' the windings of the wood.

ROBIN.

Must it be so? If it were so, myself
Would guide you thro' the forest to the sea.
But go not yet, stay with us, and when thy brother——

MARIAN.

Robin, I ever held that saying false
That Love is blind, but thou hast proven it true.
Why—even your woodland squirrel sees the nut
Behind the shell, and thee however mask'd
I should have known. But thou—to dream that he
My brother, my dear Walter—now, perhaps,
Fetter'd and lash'd, a galley-slave, or closed
For ever in a Moorish tower, or wreckt
And dead beneath the midland ocean, he
As gentle as he's brave—that such as he
Would wrest from me the precious ring I promised
Never to part with—No, not he, nor any.
I would have battled for it to the death.
[*In her excitement she draws her sword.*
See, thou hast wrong'd my brother and myself.

ROBIN (*kneeling*).

See then, I kneel once more to be forgiven.

Enter SCARLET, MUCH, *several of the* FORESTERS, *rushing on.*

SCARLET.

Look ! look ! he kneels ! he has anger'd the foul witch,
Who melts a waxen image by the fire,
And drains the heart and marrow from a man.

MUCH.

Our Robin beaten, pleading for his life!
Seize on the knight! wrench his sword from him!
[*They all rush on* MARIAN.

ROBIN (*springing up and waving his hand*).

Back!
Back all of you! this is Maid Marian
Flying from John—disguised.

MEN.

Maid Marian? she?

SCARLET.

Captain, we saw thee cowering to a knight
And thought thou wert bewitch'd.

MARIAN.

You dared to dream
That our great Earl, the bravest English heart
Since Hereward the Wake, would cower to any
Of mortal build. Weak natures that impute
Themselves to their unlikes, and their own want
Of manhood to their leader! he would break,
Far as he might, the power of John—but you—
What rightful cause could grow to such a heat
As burns a wrong to ashes, if the followers

Of him, who heads the movement, held him craven?
Robin—I know not, can I trust myself
With your brave band? in some of these may lodge
That baseness which for fear or monies, might
Betray me to the wild Prince.

ROBIN.

No, love, no!
Not any of these, I swear.

MEN.

No, no, we swear.

SCENE II.—*Another Glade in the Forest.*

ROBIN *and* MARIAN *passing.* *Enter* FORESTER.

FORESTER.

Knight, your good father had his draught of wine
And then he swoon'd away. He had been hurt,
And bled beneath his armour. Now he cries
'The land! the land!' Come to him.

MARIAN.

O my poor father!

ROBIN.

Stay with us in this wood, till he recover.
We know all balms and simples of the field
To help a wound. Stay with us here, sweet love,
Maid Marian, till thou wed what man thou wilt.
All here will prize thee, honour, worship thee,
Crown thee with flowers; and he will soon be well:
All will be well.

MARIAN.

O lead me to my father!

[*As they are going out enter* LITTLE JOHN *and* KATE *who falls on the neck of* MARIAN.

KATE.

No, no, false knight, thou canst not hide thyself
From her who loves thee.

LITTLE JOHN.

What!
By all the devils in and out of Hell!
Wilt thou embrace thy sweetheart 'fore my face?
Quick with thy sword! the yeoman braves the knight.
There! (*strikes her with the flat of his sword*).

MARIAN (*laying about her*).

Are the men all mad? there then, and there!

KATE.

O hold thy hand! this is our Marian.

LITTLE JOHN.

What! with this skill of fence! let go mine arm.

ROBIN.

Down with thy sword! She is my queen and thine,
The mistress of the band.

MARIAN (*sheathing her sword*).

A maiden now
Were ill-bested in these dark days of John,
Except she could defend her innocence.
O lead me to my father.

[*Exeunt* ROBIN *and* MARIAN.

LITTLE JOHN.

Speak to me,
I am like a boy now going to be whipt;
I know I have done amiss, have been a fool,
Speak to me, Kate, and say you pardon me!

KATE.

I never will speak word to thee again.
What? to mistrust the girl you say you love

Is to mistrust your own love for your girl!
How should you love if you mistrust your love?

LITTLE JOHN.

O Kate, true love and jealousy are twins,
And love is joyful, innocent, beautiful,
And jealousy is wither'd, sour and ugly:
Yet are they twins and always go together.

KATE.

Well, well, until they cease to go together,
I am but a stone and a dead stock to thee.

LITTLE JOHN.

I thought I saw thee clasp and kiss a man
And it was but a woman. Pardon me.

KATE.

Ay, for I much disdain thee, but if ever
Thou see me clasp and kiss a man indeed,
I will again be thine, and not till then. [*Exit.*

LITTLE JOHN.

I have been a fool and I have lost my Kate. [*Exit.*

Re-enter ROBIN.

ROBIN.

He dozes. I have left her watching him.
She will not marry till her father yield.
The old man dotes.
Nay—and she will not marry till Richard come,
And that's at latter Lammas—never perhaps.
Besides, tho' Friar Tuck might make us one,
An outlaw's bride may not be wife in law.
I am weary. [*Lying down on a bank.*
What's here? a dead bat in the fairy ring—
Yes, I remember, Scarlet hacking down
A hollow ash, a bat flew out at him
In the clear noon, and hook'd him by the hair,
And he was scared and slew it. My men say
The fairies haunt this glade;—if one could catch
A glimpse of them and of their fairy Queen—
Have our loud pastimes driven them all away?
I never saw them: yet I could believe
There came some evil fairy at my birth
And cursed me, as the last heir of my race:
'This boy will never wed the maid he loves,
Nor leave a child behind him' (*yawns*). Weary—
weary
As tho' a spell were on me (*he dreams*).

[*The whole stage lights up, and fairies are seen swinging on boughs and nestling in hollow trunks.*

TITANIA *on a hill,* FAIRIES *on either side of her, the moon above the hill.*

FIRST FAIRY.

Evil fairy! do you hear?
So he said who lieth here.

SECOND FAIRY.

We be fairies of the wood,
We be neither bad nor good.

FIRST FAIRY.

Back and side and hip and rib,
Nip, nip him for his fib.

TITANIA.

Nip him not, but let him snore.
We must flit for evermore.

FIRST FAIRY.

Tit, my queen, must it be so?
Wherefore, wherefore should we go?

TITANIA.

I Titania bid you flit,
And you dare to call me Tit.

FIRST FAIRY.

Tit, for love and brevity,
Not for love of levity.

TITANIA.

Pertest of our flickering mob,
Wouldst thou call my Oberon Ob?

FIRST FAIRY.

Nay, an please your Elfin Grace,
Never Ob before his face.

TITANIA.

Fairy realm is breaking down
When the fairy slights the crown.

FIRST FAIRY.

No, by wisp and glowworm, no.
Only wherefore should we go?

TITANIA.

We must fly from Robin Hood
And this new queen of the wood.

FIRST FAIRY.

True, she is a goodly thing.
Jealousy, jealousy of the king.

TITANIA.

Nay, for Oberon fled away
Twenty thousand leagues to-day.

CHORUS.

Look, there comes a deputation
From our finikin fairy nation.

Enter several FAIRIES.

THIRD FAIRY.

Crush'd my bat whereon I flew!
Found him dead and drench'd in dew,
Queen.

FOURTH FAIRY.

Quash'd my frog that used to quack
When I vaulted on his back,
Queen.

FIFTH FAIRY.

Kill'd the sward where'er they sat,
Queen.

SIXTH FAIRY.

Lusty bracken beaten flat,
Queen.

SEVENTH FAIRY.

Honest daisy deadly bruised,
Queen.

EIGHTH FAIRY.

Modest maiden lily abused,
Queen.

NINTH FAIRY.

Beetle's jewel armour crack'd,
Queen.

TENTH FAIRY.

Reed I rock'd upon broken-back'd,
Queen.

FAIRIES (*in chorus*).

We be scared with song and shout.
Arrows whistle all about.
All our games be put to rout.
All our rings be trampled out.
Lead us thou to some deep glen,
Far from solid foot of men,
Never to return again,
Queen.

TITANIA (*to* FIRST FAIRY).

Elf, with spiteful heart and eye,
Talk of jealousy? You see why
We must leave the wood and fly.

(*To all the* FAIRIES, *who sing at intervals with* TITANIA.)

Up with you, out of the forest and over the hills and away,
And over this Robin Hood's bay!
Up thro' the light of the seas by the moon's long-silvering ray!
To a land where the fay,
Not an eye to survey,
In the night, in the day,
Can have frolic and play.
Up with you, all of you, out of it! hear and obey.
Man, lying here alone,
Moody creature,
Of a nature
Stronger, sadder than my own,
Were I human, were I human,
I could love you like a woman.
Man, man,
You shall wed your Marian.
She is true, and you are true,
And you love her and she loves you;

Both be happy, and adieu for ever and for evermore—adieu.

ROBIN (*half waking*).

Shall I be happy? Happy vision, stay.

TITANIA.

Up with you, all of you, off with you, out of it, over the wood and away!

END OF ACT II

Note.—In the stage copy of my play I have had this Fairy Scene transferred to the end of the Third Act, for the sake of modern dramatic effect.

ACT III

THE CROWNING OF MARIAN

ACT III

SCENE I.—*Heart of the forest.*

MARIAN *and* KATE (*in Foresters' green*).

KATE.

What makes you seem so cold to Robin, lady?

MARIAN.

What makes thee think I seem so cold to Robin?

KATE.

You never whisper close as lovers do,
Nor care to leap into each other's arms.

MARIAN.

There is a fence I cannot overleap,
My father's will.

KATE.

Then you will wed the Sheriff?

MARIAN.

When heaven falls, I may light on such a lark!
But who art thou to catechize me—thou
That hast not made it up with Little John!

KATE.

I wait till Little John makes up to *me.*

MARIAN.

Why, my good Robin fancied me a man,
And drew his sword upon me, and Little John
Fancied he saw thee clasp and kiss a man.

KATE.

Well, if *he* fancied that *I* fancy a man
Other than *him,* he is *not* the man for me.

MARIAN.

And that would quite *un*man him, heart and soul.
For both are thine
(*Looking up.*)
But listen—overhead—

Fluting, and piping and luting 'Love, love, love'—
Those sweet tree-Cupids half-way up in heaven,
The birds—would I were one of 'em! O good Kate—
If my man-Robin were but a bird-Robin,
How happily would we lilt among the leaves
'Love, love, love, love'—what merry madness—listen!
And let them warm thy heart to Little John.
Look where he comes!

KATE.

I will not meet him yet,
I'll watch him from behind the trees, but call
Kate when you will, for I am close at hand.

KATE *stands aside and enter* ROBIN, *and after him at a little distance* LITTLE JOHN, MUCH *the Miller's son, and* SCARLET *with an oaken chaplet, and other* FORESTERS.

LITTLE JOHN.

My lord—Robin—I crave pardon—you always seem to me my lord—I Little John, he Much the miller's son, and he Scarlet, honouring all womankind, and more especially my lady Marian, do here, in the name of all our woodmen, present her with this oaken chaplet as Queen of the wood, I Little John,

he, young Scarlet, and he, old Much, and all the rest of us.

MUCH.

And I, old Much, say as much, for being every inch a man I honour every inch of a woman.

ROBIN.

Friend Scarlet, art thou less a man than Much?
Why art thou mute? Dost thou not honour woman?

SCARLET.

Robin, I do, but I have a bad wife.

ROBIN.

Then let her pass as an exception, Scarlet.

SCARLET.

So I would, Robin, if any man would accept her.

MARIAN (*puts on the chaplet*).

Had I a bulrush now in this right hand
For sceptre, I were like a queen indeed.
Comrades, I thank you for your loyalty,
And take and wear this symbol of your love;
And were my kindly father sound again,
Could live as happy as the larks in heaven,

And join your feasts and all your forest games
As far as maiden might. Farewell, good fellows!

[*Exeunt several* FORESTERS, *the others withdraw to the back.*

ROBIN.

Sit here by me, where the most beaten track
Runs thro' the forest, hundreds of huge oaks,
Gnarl'd—older than the thrones of Europe—look,
What breadth, height, strength—torrents of eddying bark!
Some hollow-hearted from exceeding age—
That never be thy lot or mine!—and some
Pillaring a leaf-sky on their monstrous boles,
Sound at the core as we are. Fifty leagues
Of woodland hear and know my horn, that scares
The Baron at the torture of his churls,
The pillage of his vassals.
O maiden-wife,
The oppression of our people moves me so,
That when I think of it hotly, Love himself
Seems but a ghost, but when thou feel'st with me
The ghost returns to Marian, clothes itself
In maiden flesh and blood, and looks at once
Maid Marian, and that maiden freedom which
Would never brook the tyrant. Live thou maiden!
Thou art more my wife so feeling, than if my wife

And siding with these proud priests, and these
Barons,
Devils, that make this blessed England hell.

MARIAN.

Earl——

ROBIN.

Nay, no Earl am I. I am English yeoman.

MARIAN.

Then *I* am yeo-woman. O the clumsy word!

ROBIN.

Take thou this light kiss for thy clumsy word.
Kiss me again.

MARIAN.

Robin, I will not kiss thee,
For that belongs to marriage; but I hold thee
The husband of my heart, the noblest light
That ever flash'd across my life, and I
Embrace thee with the kisses of the soul.

ROBIN.

I thank thee.

MARIAN.

Scarlet told me—is it true?—
That John last week return'd to Nottingham,
And all the foolish world is pressing thither.

ROBIN.

Sit here, my queen, and judge the world with me.
Doubtless, like judges of another bench,
However wise, we must at times have wrought
Some great injustice, yet, far as we knew,
We never robb'd one friend of the true King.
We robb'd the traitors that are leagued with John;
We robb'd the lawyer who went against the law;
We spared the craftsman, chapman, all that live
By their own hands, the labourer, the poor priest;
We spoil'd the prior, friar, abbot, monk,
For playing upside down with Holy Writ.
'Sell all thou hast and give it to the poor;'
Take all they have and give it to thyself!
Then after we have eased them of their coins
It is our forest custom they should revel
Along with Robin.

MARIAN.

And if a woman pass——

ROBIN.

Dear, in these days of Norman license, when
Our English maidens are their prey, if ever
A Norman damsel fell into our hands,
In this dark wood when all was in our power
We never wrong'd a woman.

MARIAN.

Noble Robin.

LITTLE JOHN (*coming forward*).

Here come three beggars.

Enter the three BEGGARS.

LITTLE JOHN.

Toll!

FIRST BEGGAR.

Eh! we be beggars, we come to ask o' you. We ha' nothing.

SECOND BEGGAR.

Rags, nothing but our rags.

THIRD BEGGAR.

I have but one penny in pouch, and so you would make it two I should be grateful.

MARIAN.

Beggars, you are sturdy rogues that should be set to work. You are those that tramp the country, filch the linen from the hawthorn, poison the house-dog,

and scare lonely maidens at the farmstead. Search them, Little John.

LITTLE JOHN.

These two have forty gold marks between them, Robin.

ROBIN.

Cast them into our treasury, the beggars' mites. Part shall go to the almshouses at Nottingham, part to the shrine of our Lady. Search this other.

LITTLE JOHN.

He hath, as he said, but one penny.

ROBIN.

Leave it with him and add a gold mark thereto. He hath spoken truth in a world of lies.

THIRD BEGGAR.

I thank you, my lord.

LITTLE JOHN.

A fine, a fine! he hath called plain Robin a lord. How much for a beggar?

ROBIN.

Take his penny and leave him his gold mark.

LITTLE JOHN.

Sit there, knaves, till the captain call for you.

[*They pass behind the trunk of an oak on the right.*

MARIAN.

Art thou not hard upon them, my good Robin?

ROBIN.

They might be harder upon thee, if met in a black lane at midnight: the throat might gape before the tongue could cry who?

LITTLE JOHN.

Here comes a citizen, and I think his wife.

Enter CITIZEN *and* WIFE.

CITIZEN.

That business which we have in Nottingham——

LITTLE JOHN.

Halt!

CITIZEN.

O dear wife, we have fallen into the hands
Of Robin Hood.

MARIAN.

And Robin Hood hath sworn—
Shame on thee, Little John, thou hast forgotten—
That by the blessed Mother no man, so
His own true wife came with him, should be stay'd
From passing onward. Fare you well, fair lady!

[*Bowing to her.*

ROBIN.

And may your business thrive in Nottingham!

CITIZEN.

I thank you, noble sir, the very blossom
Of bandits. Curtsey to him, wife, and thank him.

WIFE.

I thank you, noble sir, and will pray for you
That *you* may thrive, but in some kindlier trade.

CITIZEN.

Away, away, wife, wilt thou anger him?

[*Exeunt* CITIZEN *and his* WIFE.

LITTLE JOHN.

Here come three friars.

ROBIN.

Marian, thou and thy woman (*looking round*),
Why, where is Kate?

MARIAN (*calling*).

Kate!

KATE.

Here!

ROBIN.

Thou and thy woman are a match for three friars. Take thou my bow and arrow and compel them to pay toll.

MARIAN.

Toll!

Enter three FRIARS.

FIRST FRIAR (*advancing*).

Behold a pretty Dian of the wood,
Prettier than that same widow which you wot of.
Ha, brother. Toll, my dear? the toll of love.

MARIAN (*drawing bow*).

Back! how much money hast thou in thy purse?

FIRST FRIAR.

Thou art playing with us. How should poor friars have money?

MARIAN.

How much? how much? Speak, or the arrow flies.

FIRST FRIAR.

How much? well, now I bethink me, I have one mark in gold which a pious son of the Church gave me this morning on my setting forth.

MARIAN (*bending bow at the second*).

And thou?

SECOND FRIAR.

Well, as he said, one mark in gold.

MARIAN (*bending bow at the third*).

And thou?

THIRD FRIAR.

One mark in gold.

MARIAN.

Search them, Kate, and see if they have spoken truth.

KATE.

They are all mark'd men. They have told but a tenth of the truth: they have each ten marks in gold.

MARIAN.

Leave them each what they say is theirs, and take the twenty-seven marks to the captain's treasury. Sit there till you be called for.

FIRST FRIAR.

We have fall'n into the hands of Robin Hood.

[MARIAN *and* KATE *return to* ROBIN.

[*The* FRIARS *pass behind an oak on the left.*

ROBIN.

Honour to thee, brave Marian, and thy Kate.
I know them arrant knaves in Nottingham.
One half of this shall go to those they have wrong'd,
One half shall pass into our treasury.
Where lies that cask of wine whereof we plunder'd
The Norman prelate?

LITTLE JOHN.

In that oak, where twelve
Can stand upright, nor touch each other.

ROBIN.

Good!
Roll it in here. These friars, thieves, and liars,
Shall drink the health of our new woodland Queen.

And they shall pledge thee, Marian, loud enough
To fright the wild hawk passing overhead,
The mouldwarp underfoot.

MARIAN.

They pledge me, Robin?
The silent blessing of one honest man
Is heard in heaven—the wassail yells of thief
And rogue and liar echo down in Hell,
And wake the Devil, and I may sicken by 'em.
Well, well, be it so, thou strongest thief of all,
For thou hast stolen my will, and made it thine.

FRIAR TUCK, LITTLE JOHN, MUCH,
and SCARLET *roll in cask.*

FRIAR TUCK.

I marvel is it sack or Malvoisie?

ROBIN.

Do me the service to tap it, and thou wilt know.

FRIAR TUCK.

I would tap myself in thy service, Robin.

ROBIN.

And thou wouldst run more wine than blood.

FRIAR TUCK.

And both at thy service, Robin.

ROBIN.

I believe thee, thou art a good fellow, though a friar. [*They pour the wine into cups.*

FRIAR TUCK.

Fill to the brim. Our Robin, King o' the woods,
Wherever the horn sound, and the buck bound,
Robin, the people's friend, the King o' the woods!
[*They drink.*

ROBIN.

To the brim and over till the green earth drink
Her health along with us in this rich draught,
And answer it in flowers. The Queen o' the woods,
Wherever the buck bound, and the horn sound,
Maid Marian, Queen o' the woods! [*They drink.*
Here, you three rogues,
[*To the* BEGGARS. *They come out.*
You caught a lonely woodman of our band,
And bruised him almost to the death, and took
His monies.

THIRD BEGGAR.

Captain, nay, it wasn't me.

ROBIN.

You ought to dangle up there among the crows.
Drink to the health of our new Queen o' the woods,
Or else be bound and beaten.

FIRST BEGGAR.

Sir, sir—well,
We drink the health of thy new Queen o' the woods.

ROBIN.

Louder! louder! Maid Marian, Queen o' the woods!

BEGGARS (*shouting*).

Maid Marian, Queen o' the woods: Queen o' the woods!

FIRST *and* SECOND BEGGARS (*aside*).

The black fiend grip her!

[*They drink.*

ROBIN (*to the* FRIARS).

And you three holy men,

[*They come out.*

You worshippers of the Virgin, one of you
Shamed a too trustful widow whom you heard
In her confession; and another—worse!—
An innocent maid. Drink to the Queen o' the woods,
Or else be bound and beaten.

FIRST FRIAR.

Robin Hood,
These be the lies the people tell of us,
Because we seek to curb their viciousness.
However—to this maid, this Queen o' the woods.

ROBIN.

Louder, louder, ye knaves. Maid Marian!
Queen o' the woods!

FRIARS (*shouting*).

Maid Marian, Queen o' the woods.

FIRST FRIAR (*aside*).

Maid?

SECOND FRIAR (*aside*).

Paramour!

THIRD FRIAR (*aside*).

Hell take her!

[*They drink.*

FRIAR TUCK.

Robin, will you not hear one of these beggars' catches? They can do it. I have heard 'em in the market at Mansfield.

LITTLE JOHN.

No, my lord, hear ours—Robin—I crave pardon, I always think of you as my lord, but I may still say my lady; and, my lady, Kate and I have fallen out again, and I pray you to come between us again, for, my lady, we have made a song in your honour, so your ladyship care to listen.

ROBIN.

Sing, and by St. Mary these beggars and these friars shall join you. Play the air, Little John.

LITTLE JOHN.

Air and word, my lady, are maid and man. Join them and they are a true marriage; and so, I pray you, my lady, come between me and my Kate and make us one again. Scarlet, begin.

[*Playing the air on his viol.*

SCARLET.

By all the deer that spring
Thro' wood and lawn and ling,
When all the leaves are green;
By arrow and gray goosewing,
When horn and echo ring,
We care so much for a King;
We care not much for a Queen—
For a Queen, for a Queen o' the woods.

MARIAN.

Do you call that in my honour?

SCARLET.

Bitters before dinner, my lady, to give you a relish. The first part—made before you came among us—they put it upon me because I have a bad wife. I love you all the same. Proceed. [*All the rest sing.*

By all the leaves of spring,
And all the birds that sing
When all the leaves are green;
By arrow and by bowstring,
We care so much for a King
That we would die for a Queen—
For a Queen, for a Queen o' the woods.

Enter FORESTER.

FORESTER.

Black news, black news from Nottingham! I grieve
I am the Raven who croaks it. My lord John,
In wrath because you drove him from the forest,
Is coming with a swarm of mercenaries
To break our band and scatter us to the winds.

MARIAN.

O Robin, Robin! See that men be set

Along the glades and passes of the wood
To warn us of his coming! then each man
That owns a wife or daughter, let him bury her
Even in the bowels of the earth to 'scape
The glance of John——

ROBIN.

You hear your Queen, obey!

END OF ACT III

ACT IV

THE CONCLUSION

ACT IV

SCENE.—*A forest bower, cavern in background. Sunrise.*

MARIAN (*rising to meet Robin*).

Robin, the sweet light of a mother's eye,
That beam of dawn upon the opening flower,
Has never glanced upon me when a child.
He was my father, mother, both in one.
The love that children owe to both I give
To him alone.

(ROBIN *offers to caress her.*)

MARIAN.

Quiet, good Robin, quiet!
You lovers are such clumsy summer-flies
For ever buzzing at your lady's face.

ROBIN.

Bees rather, flying to the flower for honey.

MARIAN (*sings*).

The bee buzz'd up in the heat.
'I am faint for your honey, my sweet.'
The flower said 'Take it, my dear,
For now is the spring of the year.
So come, come!'
'Hum!'
And the bee buzz'd down from the heat.

And the bee buzz'd up in the cold
When the flower was wither'd and old.
'Have you still any honey, my dear?'
She said 'It's the fall of the year,
But come, come!'
'Hum!'
And the bee buzz'd off in the cold.

ROBIN.

Out on thy song!

MARIAN.

Did I not sing it in tune?

ROBIN.

No, sweetheart! out of tune with Love and me.

MARIAN.

And yet in tune with Nature and the bees.

ROBIN.

Out on it, I say, as out of tune and time!

MARIAN.

Till thou thyself shalt come to sing it—in time.

ROBIN (*taking a tress of her hair in his hand*).

Time! if his backward-working alchemy
Should change this gold to silver, why, the silver
Were dear as gold, the wrinkle as the dimple.
Thy bee should buzz about the Court of John.
No ribald John is Love, no wanton Prince,
The ruler of an hour, but lawful King,
Whose writ will run thro' all the range of life.
Out upon all hard-hearted maidenhood!

MARIAN.

And out upon all simple batchelors!
Ah, well! thou seest the land has come between us,
And my sick father here has come between us,
And this rich Sheriff too has come between us;
So, is it not all over now between us?
Gone, like a deer that hath escaped thine arrow!

ROBIN.

What deer when I have mark'd him ever yet
Escaped mine arrow? over is it? wilt thou
Give me thy hand on that?

MARIAN.

Take it.

ROBIN (*kisses her hand*).

The Sheriff!
This ring cries out against thee. Say it again,
And by this ring the lips that never breathed
Love's falsehood to true maid will seal Love's truth
On those sweet lips that dare to dally with it.

MARIAN.

Quiet, quiet! or I will to my father.

ROBIN.

So, then, thy father will not grace our feast
With his white beard to-day.

MARIAN.

Being so sick
How should he, Robin?

ROBIN.

Then that bond he hath
Of the Abbot—wilt thou ask him for it?

MARIAN.

Why?

ROBIN.

I have sent to the Abbot and justiciary
To bring their counter-bond into the forest.

MARIAN.

But will they come?

ROBIN.

If not I have let them know
Their lives unsafe in any of these our woods,
And in the winter I will fire their farms.
But I have sworn by our Lady if they come
I will not tear the bond, but see fair play
Betwixt them and Sir Richard—promised too,
So that they deal with us like honest men,
They shall be handled with all courteousness.

MARIAN.

What wilt thou do with the bond then?

ROBIN.

Wait and see.

What wilt thou do with the Sheriff?

MARIAN.

Wait and see.

I bring the bond. [*Exit* MARIAN.

Enter LITTLE JOHN, FRIAR TUCK, *and* MUCH, *and* FORESTERS *and* PEASANTS *laughing and talking.*

ROBIN.

Have ye glanced down thro' all the forest ways
And mark'd if those two knaves from York be coming?

LITTLE JOHN.

Not yet, but here comes one of bigger mould.
[*Enter* KING RICHARD.
Art thou a knight?

KING RICHARD.

I am.

ROBIN.

And walkest here
Unarmour'd? all these walks are Robin Hood's
And sometimes perilous.

KING RICHARD.

Good! but having lived
For twenty days and nights in mail, at last
I crawl'd like a sick crab from my old shell,
That I might breathe for a moment free of shield
And cuirass in this forest where I dream'd

That all was peace—not even a Robin Hood—
(*Aside*) What if these knaves should know me for their King?

ROBIN.

Art thou for Richard, or allied to John?

KING RICHARD.

I *am* allied to John.

ROBIN.

The worse for thee.

KING RICHARD.

Art thou that banish'd lord of Huntingdon,
The chief of these outlaws who break the law?

ROBIN.

I am the yeoman, plain Robin Hood, and being out of the law how should we break the law? if we broke into it again we should break the law, and then we were no longer outlaws.

KING RICHARD.

But, Earl, if thou be he——

FRIAR TUCK.

Fine him! fine him! he hath called plain Robin an earl. How much is it, Robin, for a knight?

ROBIN.

A mark.

KING RICHARD (*gives it*).

There.

ROBIN.

Thou payest easily, like a good fellow,
But being o' John's side we must have thy gold.

KING RICHARD.

But I am more for Richard than for John.

ROBIN.

What, what, a truckler! a word-eating coward!
Nay, search him then. How much hast thou about thee?

KING RICHARD.

I had one mark.

ROBIN.

What more?

KING RICHARD.

No more, I think.
But how then if I will not bide to be search'd?

ROBIN.

We are four to one.

KING RICHARD.

And I might deal with four.

ROBIN.

Good, good, I love thee for that! but if I wind
This forest-horn of mine I can bring down
Fourscore tall fellows on thee.

KING RICHARD.

Search me then.
I should be hard beset with thy fourscore.

LITTLE JOHN (*searching* KING RICHARD).

Robin, he hath no more. He hath spoken truth.

ROBIN.

I am glad of it. Give him back his gold again.

KING RICHARD.

But I had liefer than this gold again—
Not having broken fast the livelong day—
Something to eat.

ROBIN.

And thou shalt have it, man.
Our feast is yonder, spread beneath an oak,

Venison, and wild boar, hare, geese, besides
Hedge-pigs, a savoury viand, so thou be
Squeamish at eating the King's venison.

KING RICHARD.

Nay, Robin, I am like thyself in that
I look on the King's venison as my own.

FRIAR TUCK.

Ay, ay, Robin, but let him know our forest laws: he that pays not for his dinner must fight for it. In the sweat of thy brow, says Holy Writ, shalt thou eat bread, but in the sweat of thy brow and thy breast, and thine arms, and thy legs, and thy heart, and thy liver, and in the fear of thy life shalt thou eat the King's venison—ay, and so thou fight at quarterstaff for thy dinner with our Robin, that will give thee a new zest for it, though thou wert like a bottle full up to the cork, or as hollow as a kex, or the shambles-oak, or a weasel-sucked egg, or the head of a fool, or the heart of Prince John, or any other symbol of vacuity.

[*They bring out the quarterstaffs, and the* FORESTERS *and* PEASANTS *crowd round to see the games, and applaud at intervals.*

KING RICHARD.

Great woodland king, I know not quarterstaff.

LITTLE JOHN.

A fine! a fine! He hath called plain Robin a king.

ROBIN.

A shadow, a poetical fiction—did ye not call me king in your song?—a mere figure. Let it go by.

FRIAR TUCK.

No figure, no fiction, Robin. What, is not man a hunting animal? And look you now, if we kill a stag, our dogs have their paws cut off, and the hunters, if caught, are blinded, or worse than blinded. Is that to be a king? If the king and the law work injustice, is not he that goes against the king and the law the true king in the sight of the King of kings? Thou art the king of the forest, and I would thou wert the king of the land.

KING RICHARD.

This friar is of much boldness, noble captain.

ROBIN.

He hath got it from the bottle, noble knight.

FRIAR TUCK.

Boldness out of the bottle! I defy thee.
Boldness is in the blood, Truth in the bottle.

She lay so long at the bottom of her well
In the cold water that she lost her voice,
And so she glided up into the heart
O' the bottle, the warm wine, and found it again.
In vino veritas. Shall I undertake
The knight at quarterstaff, or thou?

ROBIN.

Peace, magpie!
Give him the quarterstaff. Nay, but thyself
Shalt play a bout with me, that he may see
The fashion of it.

[*Plays with* FRIAR TUCK *at quarterstaff.*

KING RICHARD.

Well, then, let me try. [*They play.*
I yield, I yield. I know no quarterstaff.

ROBIN.

Then thou shalt play the game of buffets with us.

KING RICHARD.

What's that?

ROBIN.

I stand up here, thou there. I give thee
A buffet, and thou me. The Holy Virgin

Stand by the strongest. I am overbreathed,
Friar, by my two bouts at quarterstaff.
Take him and try him, friar.

FRIAR TUCK.

There! [*Strikes.*

KING RICHARD (*strikes*).

There! [FRIAR *falls.*

FRIAR TUCK.

There!
Thou hast roll'd over the Church militant
Like a tod of wool from wagon into warehouse.
Nay, I defy thee still. Try me an hour hence.
I am misty with my thimbleful of ale.

ROBIN.

Thou seest, Sir Knight, our friar is so holy
That he's a miracle-monger, and can make
Five quarts pass into a thimble. Up, good Much.

FRIAR TUCK.

And show thyself more of a man than me.

MUCH.

Well, no man yet has ever bowl'd me down.

SCARLET.

Ay, for old Much is every inch a man.

ROBIN.

We should be all the more beholden to him.

MUCH.

Much and more! much and more! I am the oldest of thy men, and thou and thy youngsters are always muching and moreing me.

ROBIN.

Because thou art always so much more of a man than my youngsters, old Much.

MUCH.

Well, we Muches be old.

ROBIN.

Old as the hills.

MUCH.

Old as the mill. We had it i' the Red King's time, and so I *may* be more of a man than to be bowled over like a ninepin. There! [*Strikes.*

KING RICHARD.

There! [MUCH *falls.*

ROBIN.

'Much would have more,' says the proverb; but Much hath had more than enough. Give me thy hand, Much; I love thee (*lifts him up*). At him, Scarlet!

SCARLET.

I cannot cope with him: my wrist is strain'd.

KING RICHARD.

Try, thyself, valorous Robin!

ROBIN.

I am mortally afear'd o' thee, thou big man,
But seeing valour is one against all odds,
There!

KING RICHARD.

There! [ROBIN *falls back, and is caught in the arms of* LITTLE JOHN.

ROBIN.

Good, now I love thee mightily, thou tall fellow.
Break thine alliance with this faithless John,
And live with us and the birds in the green wood.

KING RICHARD.

I cannot break it, Robin, if I wish'd.
Still I am more for Richard than for John.

LITTLE JOHN.

Look, Robin, at the far end of the glade
I see two figures crawling up the hill.
[*Distant sound of trumpets.*

ROBIN.

The Abbot of York and his justiciary.

KING RICHARD (*aside*).

They know me. I must not as yet be known.
Friends, your free sports have swallow'd my free hour.
Farewell at once, for I must hence upon
The King's affair.

ROBIN.

Not taste his venison first?

FRIAR TUCK.

Hast thou not fought for it, and earn'd it? Stay,
Dine with my brethren here, and on thine own.

KING RICHARD.

And which be they?

FRIAR TUCK.

Geese, man! for how canst thou be thus allied
With John, and serve King Richard save thou be

A traitor or a goose? but stay with Robin;
For Robin is no scatterbrains like Richard,
Robin's a wise man, Richard a wiseacre,
Robin's an outlaw, but he helps the poor.
While Richard hath outlaw'd himself, and helps
Nor rich, nor poor. Richard's the king of courtesy,
For if he did me the good grace to kick me
I could but sneak and smile and call it courtesy,
For he's a king.
And that is only courtesy *by* courtesy—
But Robin is a thief of courtesy
Whom they that suffer by him call the blossom
Of bandits. There—to be a thief of courtesy—
There is a trade of genius, there's glory!
Again, this Richard sacks and wastes a town
With random pillage, but our Robin takes
From whom he knows are hypocrites and liars.
Again this Richard risks his life for a straw,
So lies in prison—while our Robin's life
Hangs by a thread, but he is a free man.
Richard, again, is king over a realm
He hardly knows, and Robin king of Sherwood,
And loves and doats on every dingle of it.
Again this Richard is the lion of Cyprus,
Robin, the lion of Sherwood—may this mouth
Never suck grape again, if our true Robin
Be not the nobler lion of the twain.

KING RICHARD.

Gramercy for thy preachment! if the land
Were ruleable by tongue, thou shouldst be king.
And yet thou know'st how little of thy king!
What was this realm of England, all the crowns
Of all this world, to Richard when he flung
His life, heart, soul into those holy wars
That sought to free the tomb-place of the King
Of all the world? thou, that art churchman too
In a fashion, and shouldst feel with him. Farewell!
I left mine horse and armour with a Squire,
And I must see to 'em.

ROBIN.

When wilt thou return?

KING RICHARD.

Return, I? when? when Richard will return.

ROBIN.

No sooner? when will that be? canst thou tell?
But I have ta'en a sudden fancy to thee.
Accept this horn! if e'er thou be assail'd
In any of our forests, blow upon it
Three mots, this fashion—listen! (*blows*) Canst thou
do it? [KING RICHARD *blows.*
Blown like a true son of the woods. Farewell!
[*Exit* KING RICHARD.

Enter ABBOT *and* JUSTICIARY.

FRIAR TUCK.

Church and Law, halt and pay toll!

JUSTICIARY.

Rogue, we have thy captain's safe-conduct; though he be the chief of rogues, he hath never broken his word.

ABBOT.

There is our bond.

[*Gives it to* ROBIN.

ROBIN.

I thank thee.

JUSTICIARY.

Ay, but where,
Where is this old Sir Richard of the Lea?
Thou told'st us we should meet him in the forest,
Where he would pay us down his thousand marks.

ROBIN.

Give him another month, and he will pay it.

JUSTICIARY.

We cannot give a month.

ROBIN.

Why then a week.

JUSTICIARY.

No, not an hour: the debt is due to-day.

ABBOT.

Where is this laggard Richard of the Lea?

ROBIN.

He hath been hurt, was growing whole again,
Only this morning in his agony
Lest he should fail to pay these thousand marks
He is stricken with a slight paralysis.
Have you no pity? must you see the man?

JUSTICIARY.

Ay, ay, what else? how else can this be settled?

ROBIN.

Go men, and fetch him hither on the litter.

[SIR RICHARD LEA *is brought in.*
MARIAN *comes with him.*

MARIAN.

Here is my father's bond. [*Gives it to* ROBIN HOOD.

ROBIN.

I thank thee, dear.

JUSTICIARY.

Sir Richard, it was agreed when you borrowed these monies from the Abbot that if they were not repaid within a limited time your land should be forfeit.

SIR RICHARD.

The land! the land.

MARIAN.

You see he is past himself.
What would you more?

ABBOT.

What more? one thousand marks,
Or else the land.
You hide this damsel in your forest here,
[*Pointing to* MARIAN.
You hope to hold and keep her for yourself,
You heed not how you soil her maiden fame,
You scheme against her father's weal and hers,
For so this maid would wed our brother, he
Would pay us all the debt at once, and thus
This old Sir Richard might redeem his land.
He is all for love, he cares not for the land.

SIR RICHARD.

The land, the land!

ROBIN (*giving two bags to the* ABBOT).

Here be one thousand marks
Out of our treasury to redeem the land.
[*Pointing to each of the bags.*
Half here, half there. [*Plaudits from his band.*

JUSTICIARY.

Ay, ay, but there is use, four hundred marks.

ROBIN (*giving a bag to* JUSTICIARY).

There then, four hundred marks. [*Plaudits.*

JUSTICIARY.

What did I say?
Nay, my tongue tript—five hundred marks for use.

ROBIN (*giving another bag to him*).

A hundred more? There then, a hundred more.
[*Plaudits.*

JUSTICIARY.

Ay, ay, but you see the bond and the letter of the law. It is stated there that these monies should be paid in to the Abbot at York, at the end of the month at noon, and they are delivered here in the wild wood an hour after noon.

MARIAN.

The letter—O how often justice drowns
Between the law and letter of the law!
O God, I would the letter of the law
Were some strong fellow here in the wild wood,
That thou mightst beat him down at quarterstaff!
Have you no pity?

JUSTICIARY.

You run down your game,
We ours. What pity have you for your game?

ROBIN.

We needs must live. Our bowmen are so true
They strike the deer at once to death—he falls
And knows no more.

MARIAN.

Pity, pity!—There was a man of ours
Up in the north, a goodly fellow too,
He met a stag there on so narrow a ledge—
A precipice above, and one below—
There was no room to advance or to retire.
The man lay down—the delicate-footed creature
Came stepping o'er him, so as not to harm him—
The hunter's passion flash'd into the man,
He drove his knife into the heart of the deer,
The deer fell dead to the bottom, and the man

Fell with him, and was crippled ever after.
I fear I had small pity for that man.—
You have the monies and the use of them.
What would you more?

JUSTICIARY.

What? must we dance attendance all the day?

ROBIN.

Dance! ay, by all the saints and all the devils ye shall dance. When the Church and the law have forgotten God's music, they shall dance to the music of the wild wood. Let the birds sing, and do you dance to their song. What, you will not? Strike up our music, Little John. (*He plays.*) They will not! Prick 'em in the calves with the arrow-points—prick 'em in the calves.

ABBOT.

Rogue, I am full of gout. I cannot dance.

ROBIN.

And Sir Richard cannot redeem his land. Sweat out your gout, friend, for by my life, you shall dance till he can. Prick him in the calves!

JUSTICIARY.

Rogue, I have a swollen vein in my right leg, and if thou prick me there I shall die.

ROBIN.

Prick him where thou wilt, so that he dance.

ABBOT.

Rogue, we come not alone.

JUSTICIARY.

Not the right.

ABBOT.

We told the Prince and the Sheriff of our coming.

JUSTICIARY.

Take the left leg for the love of God.

ABBOT.

They follow us.

JUSTICIARY.

You will all of you hang.

ROBIN.

Let us hang, so thou dance meanwhile; or by that same love of God we will hang *thee*, prince or no prince, sheriff or no sheriff.

JUSTICIARY.

Take care, take care! I dance—I will dance—I dance. [ABBOT *and* JUSTICIARY *dance to music, each holding a bag in each hand.*

Enter SCARLET.

SCARLET.

The Sheriff! the Sheriff, follow'd by Prince John
And all his mercenaries! We sighted 'em
Only this moment. By St. Nicholas
They must have sprung like Ghosts from underground,
Or, like the Devils they are, straight up from Hell.

ROBIN.

Crouch all into the bush!

[*The* FORESTERS *and* PEASANTS *hide behind the bushes.*

MARIAN.

Take up the litter!

SIR RICHARD.

Move me no more! I am sick and faint with pain!

MARIAN.

But, Sir, the Sheriff——

SIR RICHARD.

Let me be, I say!
The Sheriff will be welcome! let me be!

MARIAN.

Give me my bow and arrows. I remain
Beside my Father's litter.

ROBIN.

And fear not thou!
Each of us has an arrow on the cord;
We all keep watch.

Enter SHERIFF OF NOTTINGHAM.

SHERIFF.

Marian!

MARIAN.

Speak not. I wait upon a dying father.

SHERIFF.

The debt hath not been paid. She will be mine.
What are you capering for? By old St. Vitus
Have you gone mad? Has it been paid?

ABBOT (*dancing*).

O yes.

SHERIFF.

Have I lost her then?

JUSTICIARY (*dancing*).

Lost her? O no, we took
Advantage of the letter—O Lord, the vein!
Not paid at York—the wood—prick me no more!

SHERIFF.

What pricks thee save it be thy conscience, man?

JUSTICIARY.

By my halidome I felt him at my leg still. Where be they gone to?

SHERIFF.

Thou art alone in the silence of the forest
Save for this maiden and thy brother Abbot,
And this old crazeling in the litter there.

Enter on one side FRIAR TUCK *from the bush, and on the other* PRINCE JOHN *and his* SPEARMEN, *with banners and trumpets, etc.*

JUSTICIARY (*examining his leg*).

They have missed the vein.

ABBOT.

And we shall keep the land.

SHERIFF.

Sweet Marian, by the letter of the law
It seems thy father's land is forfeited.

SIR RICHARD.

No! let me out of the litter. He shall wed thee:
The land shall still be mine. Child, thou shalt wed him,
Or thine old father will go mad—he will,
He will—he feels it in his head.

MARIAN.

O peace!
Father, I cannot marry till Richard comes.

SIR RICHARD.

And then the Sheriff!

MARIAN.

Ay, the Sheriff, father,
Would buy me for a thousand marks in gold—
Sell me again perchance for twice as much.
A woman's heart is but a little thing,
Much lighter than a thousand marks in gold;

But pity for a father, it may be,
Is weightier than a thousand marks in gold.
I cannot love the Sheriff.

SIR RICHARD.

But thou wilt wed him?

MARIAN.

Ay, save King Richard, when he comes, forbid me.
Sweet heavens, I could wish that all the land
Were plunged beneath the waters of the sea,
Tho' all the world should go about in boats.

FRIAR TUCK.

Why, so should all the love-sick be sea-sick.

MARIAN.

Better than heart-sick, friar.

PRINCE JOHN (*to* SHERIFF).

See you not
They are jesting at us yonder, mocking us?
Carry her off, and let the old man die.

[*Advancing to* MARIAN.

Come, girl, thou shalt along with us on the instant.

FRIAR TUCK (*brandishing his staff*).

Then on the instant I will break thy head.

SHERIFF.

Back, thou fool-friar! Knowest thou not the Prince?

FRIAR TUCK (*muttering*).

He may be prince; he is not gentleman.

PRINCE JOHN.

Look! I will take the rope from off thy waist
And twist it round thy neck and hang thee by it.
Seize him and truss him up, and carry her off.

[FRIAR TUCK *slips into the bush.*

MARIAN (*drawing the bow*).

No nearer to me! back! My hand is firm,
Mine eye most true to one hair's-breadth of aim.
You, Prince, our king to come—you that dishonour
The daughters and the wives of your own faction—
Who hunger for the body, not the soul—
This gallant Prince would have me of his—what?
Household? or shall I call it by that new term
Brought from the sacred East, his harem? Never,
Tho' you should queen me over all the realms
Held by King Richard, could I stoop so low
As mate with one that holds no love is pure,
No friendship sacred, values neither man
Nor woman save as tools—God help the mark—
To his own unprincely ends. And you, you, Sheriff,

[*Turning to the* SHERIFF.

Who thought to buy your marrying me with gold,
Marriage is of the soul, not of the body.
Win me you cannot, murder me you may,
And all I love, Robin, and all his men,
For I am one with him and his; but while
I breathe Heaven's air, and Heaven looks down on me,
And smiles at my best meanings, I remain
Mistress of mine own self and mine own soul.
[*Retreating, with bow drawn, to the bush.*
Robin!

ROBIN.

I am here, my arrow on the cord.
He dies who dares to touch thee.

PRINCE JOHN.

Advance, advance!
What, daunted by a garrulous, arrogant girl!
Seize her and carry her off into my castle.

SHERIFF.

Thy castle!

PRINCE JOHN.

Said I not, I loved thee, man?
Risk not the love I bear thee for a girl.

SHERIFF.

Thy castle!

PRINCE JOHN.

See thou thwart me not, thou fool!
When Richard comes he is soft enough to pardon
His brother; but all those that held with him,
Except I plead for them, will hang as high
As Haman.

SHERIFF.

She is mine. I have thy promise.

PRINCE JOHN.

O ay, she shall be thine—first mine, then thine,
For she shall spend her honeymoon with me.

SHERIFF.

Woe to that land shall own thee for her king!

PRINCE JOHN.

Advance, advance!

[*They advance shouting. The* KING *in armour reappears from the wood.*

KING RICHARD.

What shouts are these that ring along the wood?

FRIAR TUCK (*coming forward*).

Hail, knight, and help us. Here is one would clutch
Our pretty Marian for his paramour,
This other, willy-nilly, for his bride.

KING RICHARD.

Damsel, is this the truth?

MARIAN.

Ay, noble knight.

FRIAR TUCK.

Ay, and she will not marry till Richard come.

KING RICHARD (*raising his vizor*).

I am here, and I am he.

PRINCE JOHN (*lowering his, and whispering to his men*).

It is not he—his face—tho' very like—
No, no! we have certain news he died in prison.
Make at him, all of you, a traitor coming
In Richard's name—it is not he—not he.
[*The men stand amazed.*

FRIAR TUCK (*going back to the bush*).

Robin, shall we not move?

ROBIN.

It is the King
Who bears all down. Let him alone awhile.
He loves the chivalry of his single arm.
Wait till he blow the horn.

FRIAR TUCK (*coming back*).

If thou be king,
Be not a fool! Why blowest thou not the horn?

KING RICHARD.

I that have turn'd their Moslem crescent pale—
I blow the horn against this rascal rout!

[FRIAR TUCK *plucks the horn from him and blows.* RICHARD *dashes alone against the* SHERIFF *and* JOHN'S *men, and is almost borne down, when* ROBIN *and his men rush in and rescue him.*

KING RICHARD (*to* ROBIN HOOD).

Thou hast saved my head at the peril of thine own.

PRINCE JOHN.

A horse! a horse! I must away at once;
I cannot meet his eyes. I go to Nottingham.
Sheriff, thou wilt find me at Nottingham. [*Exit.*

SHERIFF.

If anywhere, I shall find thee in hell.
What! go to slay his brother, and make *me*
The monkey that should roast his chestnuts for him!

KING RICHARD.

I fear to ask who left us even now.

ROBIN.

I grieve to say it was thy father's son.
Shall I not after him and bring him back?

KING RICHARD.

No, let him be. Sheriff of Nottingham,

[SHERIFF *kneels.*

I have been away from England all these years.
Heading the holy war against the Moslem,
While thou and others in our kingless realms
Were fighting underhand unholy wars
Against your lawful king.

SHERIFF.

My liege, Prince John—

KING RICHARD.

Say thou no word against my brother John.

SHERIFF.

Why then, my liege, I have no word to say.

KING RICHARD (*to* ROBIN).

My good friend Robin, Earl of Huntingdon,
For Earl thou art again, hast thou no fetters
For those of thine own band who would betray thee?

ROBIN.

I have; but these were never worn as yet.
I never found one traitor in my band.

KING RICHARD.

Thou art happier than thy king. Put him in chains.
[*They fetter the* SHERIFF.

ROBIN.

Look o'er these bonds, my liege.
[*Shows the* KING *the bonds. They talk together.*

KING RICHARD.

You, my lord Abbot, you Justiciary,
[*The* ABBOT *and* JUSTICIARY *kneel.*
I made you Abbot, you Justiciary:
You both are utter traitors to your king.

JUSTICIARY.

O my good liege, we did believe you dead.

ROBIN.

Was justice dead because the King was dead?
Sir Richard paid his monies to the Abbot.
You crost him with a quibble of your law.

KING RICHARD.

But on the faith and honour of a king
The land is his again.

SIR RICHARD.

The land! the land!
I am crazed no longer, so I have the land.
[*Comes out of the litter and kneels.*
God save the King!

KING RICHARD (*raising* SIR RICHARD).

I thank thee, good Sir Richard.
Maid Marian.

MARIAN.

Yes, King Richard.

KING RICHARD.

Thou wouldst marry
This Sheriff when King Richard came again
Except—

MARIAN.

The King forbad it. True, my liege.

KING RICHARD.

How if the King command it?

MARIAN.

Then, my liege,
If you would marry me with a traitor sheriff,
I fear I might prove traitor with the sheriff.

KING RICHARD.

But if the King forbid thy marrying
With Robin, our good Earl of Huntingdon.

MARIAN.

Then will I live for ever in the wild wood.

ROBIN (*coming forward*).

And I with thee.

KING RICHARD.

On nuts and acorns, ha!
Or the King's deer? Earl, thou when we were hence
Hast broken all our Norman forest-laws,
And scruplest not to flaunt it to our face
That thou wilt break our forest laws again
When we are here. Thou art overbold.

ROBIN.

My king,
I am but the echo of the lips of love.

KING RICHARD.

Thou hast risk'd thy life for mine: bind these two men.

[*They take the bags from the* ABBOT *and* JUSTICIARY, *and proceed to fetter them.*

JUSTICIARY.

But will the King, then, judge us all unheard?
I can defend my cause against the traitors
Who fain would make me traitor. If the King
Condemn us without trial, men will call him
An Eastern tyrant, not an English king.

ABBOT.

Besides, my liege, these men are outlaws, thieves,
They break thy forest laws—nay, by the rood
They have done far worse—they plunder—yea, ev'n bishops,
Yea, ev'n archbishops—if thou side with these,
Beware, O King, the vengeance of the Church.

FRIAR TUCK (*brandishing his staff*).

I pray you, my liege, let me execute the vengeance of the Church upon them. I have a stout crabstick here, which longs to break itself across their backs.

ROBIN.

Keep silence, bully friar, before the King.

FRIAR TUCK.

If a cat may look at a king, may not a friar speak to one?

KING RICHARD.

I have had a year of prison-silence, Robin,
And heed him not—the vengeance of the Church!
Thou shalt pronounce the blessing of the Church
On those two here, Robin and Marian.

MARIAN.

He is but hedge-priest, Sir King.

KING RICHARD.

And thou their Queen.
Our rebel Abbot then shall join your hands,
Or lose all hope of pardon from us—yet
Not now, not now—with after-dinner grace.
Nay, by the dragon of St. George, we shall
Do some injustice, if you hold us here
Longer from our own venison. Where is it?
I scent it in the green leaves of the wood.

MARIAN.

First, king, a boon!

KING RICHARD.

Why surely ye are pardon'd,
Even this brawler of harsh truths—I trust

Half truths, good friar: ye shall with us to court.
Then, if ye cannot breathe but woodland air,
Thou Robin shalt be ranger of this forest,
And have thy fees, and break the law no more.

MARIAN.

It is not that, my lord.

KING RICHARD.

Then what, my lady?

MARIAN.

This is the gala-day of thy return.
I pray thee, for the moment strike the bonds
From these three men, and let them dine with us,
And lie with us among the flowers, and drink—
Ay, whether it be gall or honey to 'em—
The king's good health in ale and Malvoisie.

KING RICHARD.

By Mahound I could dine with Beelzebub!
So now which way to the dinner?

MARIAN.

Past the bank
Of foxglove, then to left by that one yew.
You see the darkness thro' the lighter leaf.
But look, who comes?

Enter SAILOR.

SAILOR.

We heard Sir Richard Lea was here with Robin.
O good Sir Richard, I am like the man
In Holy Writ, who brought his talent back;
For tho' we touch'd at many pirate ports,
We ever fail'd to light upon thy son.
Here is thy gold again. I am sorry for it.

SIR RICHARD.

The gold—my son—my gold, my son, the land—
Here Abbot, Sheriff—no—no, Robin Hood.

ROBIN.

Sir Richard, let that wait till we have dined.
Are all our guests here?

KING RICHARD.

No—there's yet one other:
I will not dine without him. Come from out
[*Enter* WALTER LEA.
That oak-tree! This young warrior broke his prison
And join'd my banner in the Holy Land,
And cleft the Moslem turban at my side.
My masters, welcome gallant Walter Lea.
Kiss him, Sir Richard—kiss him, my sweet Marian.

MARIAN.

O Walter, Walter, is it thou indeed
Whose ransom was our ruin, whose return
Builds up our house again? I fear I dream.
Here—give me one sharp pinch upon the cheek
That I may feel thou art no phantom—yet
Thou art tann'd almost beyond my knowing, brother.
[*They embrace.*

WALTER LEA.

But thou art fair as ever, my sweet sister.

SIR RICHARD.

Art thou my son?

WALTER LEA.

I am, good father, I am.

SIR RICHARD.

I had despair'd of thee—that sent me crazed.
Thou art worth thy weight in all those marks of gold,
Yea, and the weight of the very land itself,
Down to the inmost centre.

ROBIN.

Walter Lea,

Give me that hand which fought for Richard there.
Embrace me, Marian, and thou, good Kate,
[*To* KATE *entering.*
Kiss and congratulate me, my good Kate.
[*She kisses him.*

LITTLE JOHN.

Lo now! lo now!
I have seen thee clasp and kiss a man indeed,
For our brave Robin is a man indeed.
Then by thine own account thou shouldst be mine.

KATE.

Well then, who kisses first?

LITTLE JOHN.

Kiss both together.
[*They kiss each other.*

ROBIN.

Then all is well. In this full tide of love,
Wave heralds wave: thy match shall follow mine (*to* LITTLE JOHN).
Would there were more—a hundred lovers more
To celebrate this advent of our King!
Our forest games are ended, our free life,
And we must hence to the King's court. I trust

We shall return to the wood. Meanwhile, farewell
Old friends, old patriarch oaks. A thousand winters
Will strip you bare as death, a thousand summers
Robe you life-green again. *You* seem, as it were,
Immortal, and we mortal. How few Junes
Will heat our pulses quicker! How few frosts
Will chill the hearts that beat for Robin Hood!

MARIAN.

And yet I think these oaks at dawn and even,
Or in the balmy breathings of the night,
Will whisper evermore of Robin Hood.
We leave but happy memories to the forest.
We dealt in the wild justice of the woods.
All those poor serfs whom we have served will bless us,
All those pale mouths which we have fed will praise us—
All widows we have holpen pray for us,
Our Lady's blessed shrines throughout the land
Be all the richer for us. You, good friar,
You Much, you Scarlet, you dear Little John,
Your names will cling like ivy to the wood.
And here perhaps a hundred years away
Some hunter in day-dreams or half asleep
Will hear our arrows whizzing overhead,
And catch the winding of a phantom horn.

ROBIN.

And surely these old oaks will murmur thee
Marian along with Robin. I am most happy—
Art thou not mine?—and happy that our King
Is here again, never I trust to roam
So far again, but dwell among his own.
Strike up a stave, my masters, all is well.

SONG WHILE THEY DANCE A COUNTRY DANCE.

Now the King is home again, and nevermore to roam again,
Now the King is home again, the King will have his own again,
Home again, home again, and each will have his own again,
All the birds in merry Sherwood sing and sing him home again.

THE FALCON

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

The Count Federigo degli Alberighi.
Filippo, *Count's foster-brother.*
The Lady Giovanna.
Elisabetta, *the Count's nurse.*

THE FALCON.

SCENE.—*An Italian Cottage. Castle and Mountains seen through Window.*

ELISABETTA discovered seated on stool in window darning. The COUNT with Falcon on his hand comes down through the door at back. A withered wreath on the wall.

ELISABETTA.

So, my lord, the Lady Giovanna, who hath been away so long, came back last night with her son to the castle.

COUNT.

Hear that, my bird! Art thou not jealous of her?
My princess of the cloud, my plumed purveyor,
My far-eyed queen of the winds—thou that canst soar
Beyond the morning lark, and howsoe'er
Thy quarry wind and wheel, swoop down upon him
Eagle-like, lightning-like—strike, make his feathers
Glance in mid heaven. [*Crosses to chair.*
I would thou hadst a mate!
Thy breed will die with thee, and mine with me:
I am as lone and loveless as thyself. [*Sits in chair.*

Giovanna here! Ay, ruffle thyself—*be* jealous!
Thou should'st be jealous of her. Tho' I bred thee
The full-train'd marvel of all falconry,
And love thee and thou me, yet if Giovanna
Be here again—No, no! Buss me, my bird!
The stately widow has no heart for me.
Thou art the last friend left me upon earth—
No, no again to that. [*Rises and turns.*
My good old nurse,
I had forgotten thou wast sitting there.

ELISABETTA.

Ay, and forgotten thy foster-brother too.

COUNT.

Bird-babble for my falcon! Let it pass.
What art thou doing there?

ELISABETTA.

Darning your lordship.
We cannot flaunt it in new feathers now:
Nay, if we *will* buy diamond necklaces
To please our lady, we must darn, my lord.
This old thing here (*points to necklace round her neck*),
they are but blue beads—my Piero,
God rest his honest soul, he bought 'em for me,
Ay, but he knew I meant to marry him.
How couldst thou do it, my son? How couldst thou
do it?

COUNT.

She saw it at a dance, upon a neck
Less lovely than her own, and long'd for it.

ELISABETTA.

She told thee as much?

COUNT.

No, no—a friend of hers.

ELISABETTA.

Shame on her that she took it at thy hands,
She rich enough to have bought it for herself!

COUNT.

She would have robb'd me then of a great pleasure.

ELISABETTA.

But hath she yet return'd thy love?

COUNT.

Not yet!

ELISABETTA.

She should return thy necklace then.

COUNT.

Ay, if

She knew the giver; but I bound the seller
To silence, and I left it privily
At Florence, in her palace.

ELISABETTA.

And sold thine own
To buy it for her. She not know? She knows
There's none such other——

COUNT.

Madman anywhere.
Speak freely, tho' to call a madman mad
Will hardly help to make him sane again.

Enter FILIPPO.

FILIPPO.

Ah, the women, the women! Ah, Monna Giovanna, you here again! you that have the face of an angel and the heart of a—that's too positive! You that have a score of lovers and have not a heart for any of them —that's positive-negative: you that have *not* the head of a toad, and *not* a heart like the jewel in it—that's too negative; you that have a cheek like a peach and a heart like the stone in it—that's positive again—that's better!

ELISABETTA.

Sh—sh—Filippo!

FILIPPO (*turns half round*).

Here has our master been a-glorifying and a-velveting and a-silking himself, and a-peacocking and a-spreading to catch her eye for a dozen year, till he hasn't an eye left in his own tail to flourish among the peahens, and all along o' you, Monna Giovanna, all along o' you!

ELISABETTA.

Sh—sh—Filippo! Can't you hear that you are saying behind his back what you see you are saying afore his face?

COUNT.

Let him—he never spares me to my face!

FILIPPO.

No, my lord, I never spare your lordship to your lordship's face, nor behind your lordship's back, nor to right, nor to left, nor to round about and back to your lordship's face again, for I'm honest, your lordship.

COUNT.

Come, come, Filippo, what is there in the larder?

[ELISABETTA *crosses to fireplace and puts on wood.*

FILIPPO.

Shelves and hooks, shelves and hooks, and when I see the shelves I am like to hang myself on the hooks.

COUNT.

No bread?

FILIPPO.

Half a breakfast for a rat!

COUNT.

Milk?

FILIPPO.

Three laps for a cat!

COUNT.

Cheese?

FILIPPO.

A supper for twelve mites.

COUNT.

Eggs?

FILIPPO.

One, but addled.

COUNT.

No bird?

FILIPPO.

Half a tit and a hern's bill.

COUNT.

Let be thy jokes and thy jerks, man! Anything or nothing?

FILIPPO.

Well, my lord, if all-but-nothing be anything, and one

plate of dried prunes be all-but-nothing, then there is anything in your lordship's larder at your lordship's service, if your lordship care to call for it.

COUNT.

Good mother, happy was the prodigal son,
For he return'd to the rich father; I
But add my poverty to thine. And all
Thro' following of my fancy. Pray thee make
Thy slender meal out of those scraps and shreds
Filippo spoke of. As for him and me,
There sprouts a salad in the garden still.
(*To the Falcon.*) Why didst thou miss thy quarry yester-even?
To-day, my beauty, thou must dash us down
Our dinner from the skies. Away, Filippo!

[*Exit, followed by* FILIPPO.

ELISABETTA.

I knew it would come to this. She has beggared him. I always knew it would come to this! (*Goes up to table as if to resume darning, and looks out of window.*) Why, as I live, there is Monna Giovanna coming down the hill from the castle. Stops and stares at our cottage. Ay, ay! stare at it: it's all you have left us. Shame upon you! *She* beautiful! sleek as a miller's mouse! Meal enough, meat enough, well fed; but beautiful—bah! Nay, see, why she turns down the path through our little vineyard, and I sneezed three times this

morning. Coming to visit my lord, for the first time in her life too! Why, bless the saints! I'll be bound to confess her love to him at last. I forgive her, I forgive her! I knew it would come to this—I always knew it must come to this! (*Going up to door during latter part of speech and opens it.*) Come in, Madonna, come in. (*Retires to front of table and curtseys as the* Lady Giovanna *enters, then moves chair towards the hearth.*) Nay, let me place this chair for your ladyship.

[Lady Giovanna *moves slowly down stage, then crosses to chair, looking about her, bows as she sees the Madonna over fireplace, then sits in chair.*

Lady Giovanna.

Can I speak with the Count?

Elisabetta.

Ay, my lady, but won't you speak with the old woman first, and tell her all about it and make her happy? for I've been on my knees every day for these half-dozen years in hope that the saints would send us this blessed morning; and he always took you so kindly, he always took the world so kindly. When he was a little one, and I put the bitters on my breast to wean him, he made a wry mouth at it, but he took it so kindly, and your ladyship has given him bitters enough in this world, and he never made a wry mouth at you, he always took you so kindly—which is more than I

did, my lady, more than I did—and he so handsome —and bless your sweet face, you look as beautiful this morning as the very Madonna her own self—and better late than never—but come when they will—then or now—it's all for the best, come when they will—they are made by the blessed saints—these marriages.

[*Raises her hands.*

LADY GIOVANNA.

Marriages? I shall never marry again!

ELISABETTA (*rises and turns*).

Shame on her then!

LADY GIOVANNA.

Where is the Count?

ELISABETTA.

Just gone

To fly his falcon.

LADY GIOVANNA.

Call him back and say

I come to breakfast with him.

ELISABETTA.

Holy mother!

To breakfast! Oh sweet saints! one plate of prunes!

Well, Madam, I will give your message to him.

[*Exit.*

LADY GIOVANNA.

His falcon, and I come to ask for his falcon,
The pleasure of his eyes—boast of his hand—
Pride of his heart—the solace of his hours—
His one companion here—nay, I have heard
That, thro' his late magnificence of living
And this last costly gift to mine own self,

[*Shows diamond necklace.*

He hath become so beggar'd, that his falcon
Ev'n wins his dinner for him in the field.
That must be talk, not truth, but truth or talk,
How can I ask for his falcon?

[*Rises and moves as she speaks.*

O my sick boy!
My daily fading Florio, it is thou
Hath set me this hard task, for when I say
What can I do—what can I get for thee?
He answers, 'Get the Count to give me his falcon,
And that will make me well.' Yet if I ask,
He loves me, and he knows I know he loves me!
Will he not pray me to return his love—
To marry him?—(*pause*)—I can never marry him.
His grandsire struck my grandsire in a brawl
At Florence, and my grandsire stabb'd him there.
The feud between our houses is the bar
I cannot cross; I dare not brave my brother,
Break with my kin. My brother hates him, scorns
The noblest-natured man alive, and I—
Who have that reverence for him that I scarce

Dare beg him to receive his diamonds back—
How can I, dare I, ask him for his falcon?

[*Puts diamonds in her casket.*

Re-enter COUNT *and* FILIPPO. COUNT *turns to* FILIPPO.

COUNT.

Do what I said; I cannot do it myself.

FILIPPO.

Why then, my lord, we are pauper'd out and out.

COUNT.

Do what I said! [*Advances and bows low.*
Welcome to this poor cottage, my dear lady.

LADY GIOVANNA.

And welcome turns a cottage to a palace.

COUNT.

'Tis long since we have met!

LADY GIOVANNA.

To make amends
I come this day to break my fast with you.

COUNT.

I am much honour'd—yes— [*Turns to* FILIPPO.
Do what I told thee. Must I do it myself?

FILIPPO.

I will, I will. (*Sighs.*) Poor fellow! [*Exit.*

COUNT.

Lady, you bring your light into my cottage
Who never deign'd to shine into my palace.
My palace wanting you was but a cottage;
My cottage, while you grace it, is a palace.

LADY GIOVANNA.

In cottage or in palace, being still
Beyond your fortunes, you are still the king
Of courtesy and liberality.

COUNT.

I trust I still maintain my courtesy;
My liberality perforce is dead
Thro' lack of means of giving.

LADY GIOVANNA.

Yet I come
To ask a gift. [*Moves toward him a little.*

COUNT.

It will be hard, I fear,
To find one shock upon the field when all
The harvest has been carried.

LADY GIOVANNA.

But my boy—
(*Aside.*) No, no! not yet—I cannot!

COUNT.

Ay, how is he,
That bright inheritor of your eyes—your boy?

LADY GIOVANNA.

Alas, my Lord Federigo, he hath fallen
Into a sickness, and it troubles me.

COUNT.

Sick! is it so? why, when he came last year
To see me hawking, he was well enough:
And then I taught him all our hawking-phrases.

LADY GIOVANNA.

Oh yes, and once you let him fly your falcon.

COUNT.

How charm'd he was! what wonder?—A gallant boy,
A noble bird, each perfect of the breed.

LADY GIOVANNA (*sinks in chair*).

What do you rate her at?

COUNT.

My bird? a hundred
Gold pieces once were offer'd by the Duke.
I had no heart to part with her for money.

LADY GIOVANNA.

No, not for money. [COUNT *turns away and sighs.*
Wherefore do you sigh?

COUNT.

I have lost a friend of late.

LADY GIOVANNA.

I could sigh with you
For fear of losing more than friend, a son;
And if he leave me—all the rest of life—
That wither'd wreath were of more worth to me.
[*Looking at wreath on wall.*

COUNT.

That wither'd wreath is of more worth to me
Than all the blossom, all the leaf of this
New-wakening year. [*Goes and takes down wreath.*

LADY GIOVANNA.

And yet I never saw
The land so rich in blossom as this year.

COUNT (*holding wreath toward her*).

Was not the year when this was gather'd richer?

LADY GIOVANNA.

How long ago was that?

COUNT.

Alas, ten summers!
A lady that was beautiful as day
Sat by me at a rustic festival
With other beauties on a mountain meadow,
And she was the most beautiful of all;
Then but fifteen, and still as beautiful.
The mountain flowers grew thickly round about.
I made a wreath with some of these; I ask'd
A ribbon from her hair to bind it with;
I whisper'd, Let me crown you Queen of Beauty,
And softly placed the chaplet on her head.
A colour, which has colour'd all my life,
Flush'd in her face; then I was call'd away;
And presently all rose, and so departed.
Ah! she had thrown my chaplet on the grass,
And there I found it.

[*Lets his hands fall, holding wreath despondingly.*

LADY GIOVANNA (*after pause*).

How long since do you say?

COUNT.

That was the very year before you married.

LADY GIOVANNA.

When I was married you were at the wars.

COUNT.

Had she not thrown my chaplet on the grass,
It may be I had never seen the wars.

[*Replaces wreath whence he had taken it.*

LADY GIOVANNA.

Ah, but, my lord, there ran a rumour then
That you were kill'd in battle. I can tell you
True tears that year were shed for you in Florence.

COUNT.

It might have been as well for me. Unhappily
I was but wounded by the enemy there
And then imprison'd.

LADY GIOVANNA.

Happily, however,
I see you quite recover'd of your wound.

COUNT.

No, no, not quite, Madonna, not yet, not yet.

Re-enter FILIPPO.

FILIPPO.

My lord, a word with you.

COUNT.

Pray, pardon me!

[LADY GIOVANNA *crosses, and passes behind chair and takes down wreath; then goes to chair by table.*

COUNT (*to* FILIPPO).

What is it, Filippo?

FILIPPO.

Spoons, your lordship.

COUNT.

Spoons!

FILIPPO.

Yes, my lord, for wasn't my lady born with a golden spoon in her ladyship's mouth, and we haven't never so much as a silver one for the golden lips of her ladyship.

COUNT.

Have we not half a score of silver spoons?

FILIPPO.

Half o' one, my lord!

COUNT.

How half of one?

FILIPPO.

I trod upon him even now, my lord, in my hurry, and broke him.

COUNT.

And the other nine?

FILIPPO.

Sold! but shall I not mount with your lordship's leave to her ladyship's castle, in your lordship's and her ladyship's name, and confer with her ladyship's seneschal, and so descend again with some of her ladyship's own appurtenances?

COUNT.

Why—no, man. Only see your cloth be clean.

[*Exit* FILIPPO.

LADY GIOVANNA.

Ay, ay, this faded ribbon was the mode
In Florence ten years back. What's here? a scroll
Pinned to the wreath.
My lord, you have said so much
Of this poor wreath that I was bold enough
To take it down, if but to guess what flowers
Had made it; and I find a written scroll
That seems to run in rhymings. Might I read?

COUNT.

Ay, if you will.

LADY GIOVANNA.

It should be if you can.
(*Reads.*) 'Dead mountain.' Nay, for who could
trace a hand
So wild and staggering?

COUNT.

This was penn'd, Madonna,
Close to the grating on a winter morn
In the perpetual twilight of a prison,
When he that made it, having his right hand
Lamed in the battle, wrote it with his left.

LADY GIOVANNA.

O heavens! the very letters seem to shake
With cold, with pain perhaps, poor prisoner! Well,
Tell me the words—or better—for I see
There goes a musical score along with them,
Repeat them to their music.

COUNT.

You can touch
No chord in me that would not answer you
In music.

LADY GIOVANNA.

That is musically said.

[COUNT *takes guitar.* LADY GIOVANNA *sits listening with wreath in her hand, and quietly removes scroll and places it on table at the end of the song.*

COUNT (*sings, playing guitar*).

'Dead mountain flowers, dead mountain-meadow flowers,
Dearer than when you made your mountain gay,
Sweeter than any violet of to-day,
Richer than all the wide world-wealth of May,
To me, tho' all your bloom has died away,
You bloom again, dead mountain-meadow flowers.'

Enter ELISABETTA *with cloth.*

ELISABETTA.

A word with you, my lord!

COUNT (*singing*).

'O mountain flowers!'

ELISABETTA.

A word, my lord! (*Louder*).

COUNT (*sings*).

'Dead flowers!'

ELISABETTA.

A word, my lord! (*Louder*).

COUNT.

I pray you pardon me again!

[LADY GIOVANNA *looking at wreath.*

(COUNT *to* ELISABETTA.)

What is it?

ELISABETTA.

My lord, we have but one piece of earthenware to serve the salad in to my lady, and that cracked!

COUNT.

Why then, that flower'd bowl my ancestor
Fetch'd from the farthest east—we never use it
For fear of breakage—but this day has brought
A great occasion. You can take it, nurse!

ELISABETTA.

I did take it, my lord, but what with my lady's coming that had so flurried me, and what with the fear of breaking it, I did break it, my lord: it is broken!

COUNT.

My one thing left of value in the world!
No matter! see your cloth be white as snow!

ELISABETTA (*pointing thro' window*).

White? I warrant thee, my son, as the snow yonder on the very tip-top o' the mountain.

COUNT.

And yet to speak white truth, my good old mother,
I have seen it like the snow on the moraine.

ELISABETTA.

How can your lordship say so? There my lord!
[*Lays cloth.*
O my dear son, be not unkind to me.
And one word more. [*Going—returns.*

COUNT (*touching guitar*).

Good! let it be but one.

ELISABETTA.

Hath she return'd thy love?

COUNT.

Not yet!

ELISABETTA.

And will she?

COUNT (*looking at* LADY GIOVANNA).

I scarce believe it!

ELISABETTA.

Shame upon her then! [*Exit.*

COUNT (*sings*).

'Dead mountain flowers'——
Ah well, my nurse has broken
The thread of my dead flowers, as she has broken

My china bowl. My memory is as dead.

[*Goes and replaces guitar.*

Strange that the words at home with me so long
Should fly like bosom friends when needed most.
So by your leave if you would hear the rest,
The writing.

LADY GIOVANNA (*holding wreath toward him*).

There! my lord, you are a poet,
And can you not imagine that the wreath,
Set, as you say, so lightly on her head,
Fell with her motion as she rose, and she,
A girl, a child, then but fifteen, however
Flutter'd or flatter'd by your notice of her,
Was yet too bashful to return for it?

COUNT.

Was it so indeed? was it so? was it so?

[*Leans forward to take wreath, and touches* LADY GIOVANNA'S *hand, which she withdraws hastily; he places wreath on corner of chair.*

LADY GIOVANNA (*with dignity*).

I did not say, my lord, that it was so;
I said you might imagine it was so.

Enter FILIPPO *with bowl of salad, which he places on table.*

FILIPPO.

Here's a fine salad for my lady, for tho' we have been a soldier, and ridden by his lordship's side, and seen the red of the battle-field, yet are we now drill-sergeant to his lordship's lettuces, and profess to be great in green things and in garden-stuff.

LADY GIOVANNA.

I thank thee, good Filippo. [*Exit* FILIPPO.

Enter ELISABETTA *with bird on a dish which she places on table.*

ELISABETTA (*close to table*).

Here's a fine fowl for my lady; I had scant time to do him in. I hope he be not underdone, for we be undone in the doing of him.

LADY GIOVANNA.

I thank you, my good nurse.

FILIPPO (*re-entering with plate of prunes*).

And here are fine fruits for my lady—prunes, my lady, from the tree that my lord himself planted here in the blossom of his boyhood—and so I, Filippo, being, with your ladyship's pardon, and as your ladyship knows, his lordship's own foster-brother, would commend them to your ladyship's most peculiar appreciation.

[*Puts plate on table.*

ELISABETTA.

Filippo!

LADY GIOVANNA (COUNT *leads her to table*).

Will you not eat with me, my lord?

COUNT.

I cannot,
Not a morsel, not one morsel. I have broken
My fast already. I will pledge you. Wine!
Filippo, wine!

[*Sits near table;* FILIPPO *brings flask, fills the* COUNT'S *goblet, then* LADY GIOVANNA'S; ELISABETTA *stands at the back of* LADY GIOVANNA'S *chair.*

COUNT.

It is but thin and cold,
Not like the vintage blowing round your castle.
We lie too deep down in the shadow here.
Your ladyship lives higher in the sun.

[*They pledge each other and drink.*

LADY GIOVANNA.

If I might send you down a flask or two
Of that same vintage? There is iron in it.
It has been much commended as a medicine.
I give it my sick son, and if you be
Not quite recover'd of your wound, the wine

Might help you. None has ever told me yet
The story of your battle and your wound.

FILIPPO (*coming forward*).

I can tell you, my lady, I can tell you.

ELISABETTA.

Filippo! will you take the word out of your master's own mouth?

FILIPPO.

Was it there to take? Put it there, my lord.

COUNT.

Giovanna, my dear lady, in this same battle
We had been beaten—they were ten to one.
The trumpets of the fight had echo'd down,
I and Filippo here had done our best,
And, having passed unwounded from the field,
Were seated sadly at a fountain side,
Our horses grazing by us, when a troop,
Laden with booty and with a flag of ours
Ta'en in the fight——

FILIPPO.

Ay, but we fought for it back,
And kill'd——

ELISABETTA.

Filippo!

COUNT.

A troop of horse——

FILIPPO.

Five hundred!

COUNT.

Say fifty!

FILIPPO.

And we kill'd 'em by the score!

ELISABETTA.

Filippo!

FILIPPO.

Well, well, well! I bite my tongue.

COUNT.

We may have left their fifty less by five.
However, staying not to count how many,
But anger'd at their flaunting of our flag,
We mounted, and we dash'd into the heart of 'em.
I wore the lady's chaplet round my neck;
It served me for a blessed rosary.
I am sure that more than one brave fellow owed
His death to the charm in it.

ELISABETTA.

Hear that, my lady!

COUNT.

I cannot tell how long we strove before
Our horses fell beneath us; down we went
Crush'd, hack'd at, trampled underfoot. The night,
As some cold-manner'd friend may strangely do us
The truest service, had a touch of frost
That help'd to check the flowing of the blood.
My last sight ere I swoon'd was one sweet face
Crown'd with the wreath. *That* seem'd to come and go.
They left us there for dead!

ELISABETTA.

Hear that, my lady!

FILIPPO.

Ay, and I left two fingers there for dead. See, my lady! (*Showing his hand.*)

LADY GIOVANNA.

I see, Filippo!

FILIPPO.

And I have small hope of the gentleman gout in my great toe.

LADY GIOVANNA.

And why, Filippo? [*Smiling absently.*

FILIPPO.

I left him there for dead too!

ELISABETTA.

She smiles at him—how hard the woman is!
My lady, if your ladyship were not
Too proud to look upon the garland, you
Would find it stain'd——

COUNT (*rising*).

Silence, Elisabetta!

ELISABETTA.

Stain'd with the blood of the best heart that ever
Beat for one woman. [*Points to wreath on chair.*

LADY GIOVANNA (*rising slowly*).

I can eat no more!

COUNT.

You have but trifled with our homely salad,
But dallied with a single lettuce-leaf;
Not eaten anything.

LADY GIOVANNA.

Nay, nay, I cannot.
You know, my lord, I told you I was troubled.
My one child Florio lying still so sick,
I bound myself, and by a solemn vow,
That I would touch no flesh till he were well
Here, or else well in Heaven, where all is well.

[ELISABETTA *clears table of bird and salad:* FILIPPO *snatches up the plate of prunes and holds them to* LADY GIOVANNA.

FILIPPO.

But the prunes, my lady, from the tree that his lordship——

LADY GIOVANNA.

Not now, Filippo. My lord Federigo,
Can I not speak with you once more alone?

COUNT.

You hear, Filippo? My good fellow, go!

FILIPPO.

But the prunes that your lordship——

ELISABETTA.

Filippo!

COUNT.

Ay, prune our company of thine own and go!

ELISABETTA.

Filippo!

FILIPPO (*turning*).

Well, well! the women! [*Exit.*

COUNT.

And thou too leave us, my dear nurse, alone.

ELISABETTA (*folding up cloth and going*).

And me too! Ay, the dear nurse will leave you alone; but, for all that, she that has eaten the yolk is scarce like to swallow the shell.

[*Turns and curtseys stiffly to* LADY GIOVANNA, *then exit.* LADY GIOVANNA *takes out diamond necklace from casket.*

LADY GIOVANNA.

I have anger'd your good nurse; these old-world servants
Are all but flesh and blood with those they serve.
My lord, I have a present to return you,
And afterwards a boon to crave of you.

COUNT.

No, my most honour'd and long-worshipt lady,
Poor Federigo degli Alberighi
Takes nothing in return from you except
Return of his affection—can deny
Nothing to you that you require of him.

LADY GIOVANNA.

Then I require you to take back your diamonds—
[*Offering necklace.*
I doubt not they are yours. No other heart
Of such magnificence in courtesy
Beats—out of heaven. They seem'd too rich a prize
To trust with any messenger. I came

In person to return them. [*Count draws back.*
If the phrase
'Return' displease you, we will say—exchange them
For your—for your——

COUNT (*takes a step toward her and then back*).

For mine—and what of mine?

LADY GIOVANNA.

Well, shall we say this wreath and your sweet rhymes?

COUNT.

But have you ever worn my diamonds?

LADY GIOVANNA.

No!
For that would seem accepting of your love.
I cannot brave my brother—but be sure
That I shall never marry again, my lord!

COUNT.

Sure?

LADY GIOVANNA.

Yes!

COUNT.

Is this your brother's order?

LADY GIOVANNA.

No!

For he would marry me to the richest man
In Florence; but I think you know the saying—
'Better a man without riches, than riches without a man.'

COUNT.

A noble saying—and acted on would yield
A nobler breed of men and women. Lady,
I find you a shrewd bargainer. The wreath
That once you wore outvalues twentyfold
The diamonds that you never deign'd to wear.
But lay them there for a moment!

[*Points to table.* LADY GIOVANNA *places necklace on table.*

And be you
Gracious enough to let me know the boon
By granting which, if aught be mine to grant,
I should be made more happy than I hoped
Ever to be again.

LADY GIOVANNA.

Then keep your wreath,
But you will find me a shrewd bargainer still.
I cannot keep your diamonds, for the gift
I ask for, to *my* mind and at this present
Outvalues all the jewels upon earth.

COUNT.

It should be love that thus outvalues all.
You speak like love, and yet you love me not.
I have nothing in this world but love for you.

LADY GIOVANNA.

Love? it *is* love, love for my dying boy,
Moves me to ask it of you.

COUNT.

What? my time?
Is it my time? Well, I can give my time
To him that is a part of you, your son.
Shall I return to the castle with you? Shall I
Sit by him, read to him, tell him my tales,
Sing him my songs? You know that I can touch
The ghittern to some purpose.

LADY GIOVANNA.

No, not that!
I thank you heartily for that—and you,
I doubt not from your nobleness of nature,
Will pardon me for asking what I ask.

COUNT.

Giovanna, dear Giovanna, I that once
The wildest of the random youth of Florence
Before I saw you—all my nobleness
Of nature, as you deign to call it, draws
From you, and from my constancy to you.
No more, but speak.

LADY GIOVANNA.

I will. You know sick people,

More specially sick children, have strange fancies,
Strange longings; and to thwart them in their mood
May work them grievous harm at times, may even
Hasten their end. I would you had a son!
It might be easier then for you to make
Allowance for a mother—her—who comes
To rob you of your one delight on earth.
How often has my sick boy yearn'd for this!
I have put him off as often; but to-day
I dared not—so much weaker, so much worse
For last day's journey. I was weeping for him;
He gave me his hand: 'I should be well again
If the good Count would give me——'

COUNT.

Give me.

LADY GIOVANNA.

His falcon.

COUNT (*starts back*).

My falcon!

LADY GIOVANNA.

Yes, your falcon, Federigo!

COUNT.

Alas, I cannot!

LADY GIOVANNA.

Cannot? Even so!
I fear'd as much. O this unhappy world!
How shall I break it to him? how shall I tell him?

The boy may die: more blessed were the rags
Of some pale beggar-woman seeking alms
For her sick son, if he were like to live,
Than all my childless wealth, if mine must die.
I was to blame—the love you said you bore me—
My lord, we thank you for your entertainment,
[*With a stately curtsey.*
And so return—Heaven help him!—to our son.
[*Turns.*

COUNT (*rushes forward*).

Stay, stay, I am most unlucky, most unhappy.
You never had look'd in on me before,
And when you came and dipt your sovereign head
Thro' these low doors, you ask'd to eat with me.
I had but emptiness to set before you,
No not a draught of milk, no not an egg,
Nothing but my brave bird, my noble falcon,
My comrade of the house, and of the field.
She had to die for it—she died for you.
Perhaps I thought with those of old, the nobler
The victim was, the more acceptable
Might be the sacrifice. I fear you scarce
Will thank me for your entertainment now.

LADY GIOVANNA (*returning*).

I bear with him no longer.

COUNT.

No, Madonna!
And he will have to bear with it as he may.

LADY GIOVANNA.

I break with him for ever!

COUNT.

Yes, Giovanna,
But he will keep his love to you for ever!

LADY GIOVANNA.

You? you? not you! My brother! my hard brother!
O Federigo, Federigo, I love you!
Spite of ten thousand brothers, Federigo.
[*Falls at his feet.*

COUNT (*impetuously*).

Why then the dying of my noble bird
Hath served me better than her living—then
[*Takes diamonds from table.*
These diamonds are both yours and mine—have won
Their value again—beyond all markets—there
I lay them for the first time round your neck.
[*Lays necklace round her neck.*
And then this chaplet—No more feuds, but peace,
Peace and conciliation! I will make
Your brother love me. See, I tear away
The leaves were darken'd by the battle—
[*Pulls leaves off and throws them down.*
—crown you
Again with the same crown my Queen of Beauty.
[*Places wreath on her head.*

Rise—I could almost think that the dead garland
Will break once more into the living blossom.
Nay, nay, I pray you rise.
[*Raises her with both hands.*
We two together
Will help to heal your son—your son and mine—
We shall do it—we shall do it. [*Embraces her.*
The purpose of my being is accomplish'd,
And I am happy!

LADY GIOVANNA.

And I too, Federigo.

THE PROMISE OF MAY

'A surface man of theories, true to none.'

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

FARMER DOBSON.
Mr. PHILIP EDGAR (*afterwards* Mr. HAROLD).
FARMER STEER (DORA *and* EVA'S *Father*).
Mr. WILSON (*a Schoolmaster*).

HIGGINS
JAMES
DAN SMITH
JACKSON
ALLEN
} *Farm Labourers.*

DORA STEER.
EVA STEER.

SALLY ALLEN
MILLY
} *Farm Servants.*

Farm Servants, Labourers, etc.

THE PROMISE OF MAY.

ACT I.

SCENE.—*Before Farmhouse.*

Farming Men and Women. Farming Men carrying forms, &c., Women carrying baskets of knives and forks, &c.

1ST FARMING MAN.

Be thou a-gawin' to the long barn?

2ND FARMING MAN.

Ay, to be sewer! Be thou?

1ST FARMING MAN.

Why, o' coorse, fur it be the owd man's birthdaäy. He be heighty this very daäy, and 'e telled all on us to be i' the long barn by one o'clock, fur he'll gie us a big dinner, and haäfe th' parish 'll be theer, an' Miss Dora, an' Miss Eva, an' all!

2ND FARMING MAN.

Miss Dora be coomed back, then?

1ST FARMING MAN.

Ay, haäfe an hour ago. She be in theer now. (*Pointing to house.*) Owd Steer wur afeärd she wouldn't be back i' time to keep his birthdaäy, and he wur in a tew about it all the murnin'; and he sent me wi' the gig to Littlechester to fetch 'er; and 'er an' the owd man they fell a kissin' o' one another like two sweet-'arts i' the poorch as soon as he clapt eyes of 'er.

2ND FARMING MAN.

Foälks says he likes Miss Eva the best.

1ST FARMING MAN.

Naäy, I knaws nowt o' what foälks says, an' I caäres nowt neither. Foälks doesn't hallus knaw thessens; but sewer I be, they be two o' the purtiest gels ye can see of a summer murnin'.

2ND FARMING MAN.

Beänt Miss Eva gone off a bit of 'er good looks o' laäte?

1ST FARMING MAN.

Noä, not a bit.

2ND FARMING MAN.

Why coöm awaäy, then, to the long barn.

[*Exeunt.*

DORA *looks out of window.* *Enter* DOBSON.

DORA (*singing*).

The town lay still in the low sun-light,
The hen cluckt late by the white farm gate,
The maid to her dairy came in from the cow,
The stock-dove coo'd at the fall of night,
The blossom had open'd on every bough ;
O joy for the promise of May, of May,
O joy for the promise of May.

(*Nodding at* DOBSON.) I'm coming down, Mr. Dobson. I haven't seen Eva yet. Is she anywhere in the garden ?

DOBSON.

Noä, Miss. I ha'n't seed 'er neither.

DORA (*enters singing*).

But a red fire woke in the heart of the town,
And a fox from the glen ran away with the hen,
And a cat to the cream, and a rat to the cheese ;
And the stock-dove coo'd, till a kite dropt down,
And a salt wind burnt the blossoming trees ;
O grief for the promise of May, of May,
O grief for the promise of May.

I don't know why I sing that song ; I don't love it.

DOBSON.

Blessings on your pretty voice, Miss Dora. Wheer did they larn ye that ?

DORA.

In Cumberland, Mr. Dobson.

DOBSON.

An' how did ye leäve the owd uncle i' Coomberland?

DORA.

Getting better, Mr. Dobson. But he'll never be the same man again.

DOBSON.

An' how d'ye find the owd man 'ere?

DORA.

As well as ever. I came back to keep his birthday.

DOBSON.

Well, I be coomed to keep his birthdaäy an' all. The owd man be heighty to-daäy, beänt he?

DORA.

Yes, Mr. Dobson. And the day's bright like a friend, but the wind east like an enemy. Help me to move this bench for him into the sun. (*They move bench.*) No, not that way—here, under the apple tree. Thank you. Look how full of rosy blossom it is.

[*Pointing to apple tree.*

DOBSON.

Theer be redder blossoms nor them, Miss Dora.

DORA.

Where do they blow, Mr. Dobson?

DOBSON.

Under your eyes, Miss Dora.

DORA.

Do they?

DOBSON.

And your eyes be as blue as——

DORA.

What, Mr. Dobson? A butcher's frock?

DOBSON.

Noä, Miss Dora; as blue as——

DORA.

Bluebell, harebell, speedwell, bluebottle, succory, forget-me-not?

DOBSON.

Noä, Miss Dora; as blue as——

DORA.

The sky? or the sea on a blue day?

DOBSON.

Naäy then. I meän'd they be as blue as violets.

DORA.

Are they?

DOBSON.

Theer ye goäs ageän, Miss, niver believing owt I says to ye—hallus a-fobbing ma off, tho' ye knaws I love ye. I warrants ye'll think moor o' this young Squire Edgar as ha' coomed among us—the Lord knaws how—ye'll think more on 'is little finger than hall my hand at the haltar.

DORA.

Perhaps, Master Dobson. I can't tell, for I have never seen him. But my sister wrote that he was mighty pleasant, and had no pride in him.

DOBSON.

He'll be arter you now, Miss Dora.

DORA.

Will he? How can I tell?

DOBSON.

He's been arter Miss Eva, haän't he?

DORA.

Not that I know.

DOBSON.

Didn't I spy 'em a-sitting i' the woodbine harbour togither?

DORA.

What of that? Eva told me that he was taking her likeness. He's an artist.

DOBSON.

What's a hartist? I doänt believe he's iver a 'eart under his waistcoat. And I tells ye what, Miss Dora: he's no respect for the Queen, or the parson, or the justice o' peace, or owt. I ha' heärd 'im a-gawin' on 'ud make your 'air—God bless it!—stan' on end. And wuss nor that. When theer wur a meeting o' farmers at Littlechester t'other daäy, and they was all a-crying out at the bad times, he cooms up, and he calls out among our oän men, 'The land belongs to the people!'

DORA.

And what did *you* say to that?

DOBSON.

Well, I says, s'pose my pig's the land, and you says it belongs to the parish, and theer be a thousand i' the parish, taäkin' in the women and childer; and s'pose I kills my pig, and gi'es it among 'em, why there

wudn't be a dinner for nawbody, and I should ha' lost the pig.

DORA.

And what did he say to that?

DOBSON.

Nowt—what could he saäy? But I taäkes 'im fur a bad lot and a burn fool, and I haätes the very sight on him.

DORA.

(*Looking at* DOBSON.) Master Dobson, you are a comely man to look at.

DOBSON.

I thank you for that, Miss Dora, onyhow.

DORA.

Ay, but you turn right ugly when you're in an ill temper; and I promise you that if you forget yourself in your behaviour to this gentleman, my father's friend, I will never change word with you again.

Enter FARMING MAN *from barn.*

FARMING MAN.

Miss, the farming men 'ull hev their dinner i' the long barn, and the master 'ud be straänge an' pleased

if you'd step in fust, and see that all be right and reg'lar fur 'em afoor he coöm. [*Exit.*

DORA.

I go. Master Dobson, did you hear what I said?

DOBSON.

Yeas, yeas! I'll not meddle wi' 'im if he doänt meddle wi' meä. (*Exit* DORA.) Coomly, says she. I niver thowt o' mysen i' that waäy; but if she'd taäke to ma i' that waäy, or ony waäy, I'd slaäve out my life fur 'er. 'Coomly to look at,' says she—but she said it spiteful-like. To look at—yeas, 'coomly'; and she mayn't be so fur out theer. But if that be nowt to she, then it be nowt to me. (*Looking off stage.*) Schoolmaster! Why if Steer han't haxed schoolmaster to dinner, thaw 'e knaws I was hallus ageän heving schoolmaster i' the parish! fur him as be handy wi' a book bean't but haäfe a hand at a pitchfork.

Enter WILSON.

Well, Wilson. I seed that one cow o' thine i' the pinfold ageän as I wur a-coomin' 'ere.

WILSON.

Very likely, Mr. Dobson. She *will* break fence. I can't keep her in order.

DOBSON.

An' if tha can't keep thy one cow i' horder, how can tha keep all thy scholards i' horder? But let that goä by. What dost a knaw o' this Mr. Hedgar as be a-lodgin' wi' ye? I coom'd upon 'im t'other daäy lookin' at the coontry, then a-scrattin upon a bit o' paäper, then a-lookin' agean; and I taäked 'im fur soom sort of a land-surveyor—but a beänt.

WILSON.

He's a Somersetshire man, and a very civil-spoken gentleman.

DOBSON.

Gentleman! What be he a-doing here ten mile an' moor fro' a raäil? We laäys out o' the waäy fur gentlefoälk altogither—leästwaäys they niver cooms 'ere but fur the trout i' our beck, fur they be knaw'd as far as Littlechester. But 'e doänt fish neither.

WILSON.

Well, it's no sin in a gentleman not to fish.

DOBSON.

Noä, but I haätes 'im.

WILSON.

Better step out of his road, then, for he's walking to us, and with a book in his hand.

DOBSON.

An' I haätes booöks an' all, fur they puts foälk off the owd waäys.

Enter EDGAR, *reading—not seeing* DOBSON *and* WILSON.

EDGAR.

This author, with his charm of simple style
And close dialectic, all but proving man
An automatic series of sensations,
Has often numb'd me into apathy
Against the unpleasant jolts of this rough road
That breaks off short into the abysses—made me
A Quietist taking all things easily.

DOBSON.

(*Aside.*) There mun be summut wrong theer, Wilson, fur I doänt understan' it.

WILSON.

(*Aside.*) Nor I either, Mr. Dobson.

DOBSON.

(*Scornfully.*) An' thou doänt understan' it neither —and thou schoolmaster an' all.

EDGAR.

What can a man, then, live for but sensations,

Pleasant ones? men of old would undergo
Unpleasant for the sake of pleasant ones
Hereafter, like the Moslem beauties waiting
To clasp their lovers by the golden gates.
For me, whose cheerless Houris after death
Are Night and Silence, pleasant ones—the while—
If possible, here! to crop the flower and pass.

DOBSON.

Well, I never 'eärd the likes o' that afoor.

WILSON.

(*Aside.*) But I have, Mr. Dobson. It's the old Scripture text, 'Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.' I'm sorry for it, for, tho' he never comes to church, I thought better of him.

EDGAR.

'What are we, says the blind old man in Lear?
'As flies to the Gods; they kill us for their sport.'

DOBSON.

(*Aside.*) Then the owd man i' Lear should be shaämed of hissen, but noän o' the parishes goäs by that naäme 'ereabouts.

EDGAR.

The Gods! but they, the shadows of ourselves,
Have past for ever. It is Nature kills,

And not for *her* sport either. She knows nothing.
Man only knows, the worse for him! for why
Cannot *he* take his pastime like the flies?
And if my pleasure breed another's pain,
Well—is not that the course of Nature too,
From the dim dawn of Being—her main law
Whereby she grows in beauty—that her flies
Must massacre each other? this poor Nature!

DOBSON.

Natur! Natur! Well, it be i' *my* natur to knock 'im o' the 'eäd now; but I weänt.

EDGAR.

A Quietist taking all things easily—why—
Have I been dipping into this again
To steel myself against the leaving her?
(*Closes book, seeing* WILSON.)
Good day!

WILSON.

Good day, sir.

(DOBSON *looks hard at* EDGAR.)

EDGAR.

(*To* DOBSON.) Have I the pleasure, friend, of knowing you?

DOBSON.

Dobson.

EDGAR.

Good day, then, Dobson. [*Exit.*

DOBSON.

'Good daäy then, Dobson!' Civil-spoken i'deed! Why, Wilson, tha 'eärd 'im thysen—the feller couldn't find a Mister in his mouth fur me, as farms five hoonderd haäcre.

WILSON.

You never find one for me, Mr. Dobson.

DOBSON.

Noä, fur thou be nobbut schoolmaster; but I taäkes 'im fur a Lunnun swindler, and a burn fool.

WILSON.

He can hardly be both, and he pays me regular every Saturday.

DOBSON.

Yeas; but I haätes 'im.

Enter STEER, FARM MEN *and* WOMEN.

STEER.

(*Goes and sits under apple tree.*) Hev' ony o' ye seen Eva?

DOBSON.

Noä, Mr. Steer.

STEER.

Well, I reckons they'll hev' a fine cider-crop to-year if the blossom 'owds. Good murnin', neighbours, and the saäme to you, my men. I taäkes it kindly of all o' you that you be coomed—what's the newspaäper word, Wilson?—celebrate—to celebrate my birthdaäy i' this fashion. Niver man 'ed better friends, and I will saäy niver master 'ed better men: fur thaw I may ha' fallen out wi' ye sometimes, the fault, mebbe, wur as much mine as yours; and, thaw I says it mysen, niver men 'ed a better master—and I knaws what men be, and what masters be, fur I wur nobbut a laäbourer, and now I be a landlord—burn a plowman, and now, as far as money goäs, I be a gentleman, thaw I beänt naw scholard, fur I 'ednt naw time to maäke mysen a scholard while I wur maäkin' mysen a gentleman, but I ha taäen good care to turn out boäth my darters right down fine laädies.

DOBSON.

An' soä they be.

1ST FARMING MAN.

Soä they be! soä they be!

2ND FARMING MAN.

The Lord bless boath on 'em!

3RD FARMING MAN.

An' the saäme to you, Master.

4TH FARMING MAN.

And long life to boath on 'em. An' the saäme to you, Master Steer, likewise.

STEER.

Thank ye!

Enter EVA.

Wheer 'asta been?

EVA.

(*Timidly.*) Many happy returns of the day, father.

STEER.

They can't be many, my dear, but I 'oäpes they'll be 'appy.

DOBSON.

Why, tha looks haäle anew to last to a hoonderd.

STEER.

An' why shouldn't I last to a hoonderd? Haäle! why shouldn't I be haäle? fur thaw I be heighty this very daäy, I niver 'es sa much as one pin's prick of paäin; an' I can taäke my glass along wi' the youngest, fur I niver touched a drop of owt till my oän wedding-daäy, an' then I wur turned huppads o' sixty. Why shouldn't I be haäle? I ha' plowed the ten-aäcre—it be mine now—afoor ony o' ye wur burn—ye all knaws the ten-aäcre—I mun ha' plowed it moor nor a hoonderd times; hallus hup at sunrise, and I'd drive

the plow straäit as a line right i' the faäce o' the sun, then back ageän, a-follering my oän shadder—then hup ageän i' the faäce o' the sun. Eh! how the sun 'ud shine, and the larks 'ud sing i' them daäys, and the smell o' the mou'd an' all. Eh! if I could ha' gone on wi' the plowin' nobbut the smell o' the mou'd 'ud ha' maäde ma live as long as Jerusalem.

EVA.

Methusaleh, father.

STEER.

Ay, lass, but when thou be as owd as me thou'll put one word fur another as I does.

DOBSON.

But, Steer, thaw thou be haäle anew I seed tha a-limpin' up just now wi' the roomatics i' the knee.

STEER.

Roomatics! Noä; I laäme't my knee last night running arter a thief. Beänt there house-breäkers down i' Littlechester, Dobson—doänt ye hear of ony?

DOBSON.

Ay, that there be. Immanuel Goldsmiths was broke into o' Monday night, and ower a hoonderd pounds worth o' rings stolen.

STEER.

So I thowt, and I heärd the winder—that's the winder at the end o' the passage, that goäs by thy chaumber. (*Turning to* EVA.) Why, lass, what maäkes tha sa red? Did 'e git into thy chaumber?

EVA.

Father!

STEER.

Well, I runned arter thief i' the dark, and fell ageän coalscuttle and my kneeä gev waäy or I'd ha' cotched 'im, but afoor I coomed up he got thruff the winder ageän.

EVA.

Got thro' the window again?

STEER.

Ay, but he left the mark of 'is foot i' the flower-bed; now theer be noän o' my men, thinks I to mysen, 'ud ha' done it 'cep' it were Dan Smith, fur I cotched 'im once a-steälin' coäls an' I sent fur 'im, an' I measured his foot wi' the mark i' the bed, but it wouldn't fit—seeäms to me the mark wur maäde by a Lunnun boot. (*Looks at* EVA.) Why, now, what maäkes tha sa white?

EVA.

Fright, father!

STEER.

Maäke thysen eäsy. I'll hev the winder naäiled up, and put Towser under it.

EVA.

(*Clasping her hands.*) No, no, father! Towser'll tear him all to pieces.

STEER.

Let him keep awaäy, then; but coom, coom! let's be gawin. They ha' broached a barrel of aäle i' the long barn, and the fiddler be theer, and the lads and lasses 'ull hev a dance.

EVA.

(*Aside.*) Dance! small heart have I to dance. I should seem to be dancing upon a grave.

STEER.

Wheer be Mr. Edgar? about the premises?

DOBSON.

Hallus about the premises!

STEER.

So much the better, so much the better. I likes 'im, and Eva likes 'im. Eva can do owt wi' 'im; look for 'im, Eva, and bring 'im to the barn. He 'ant naw pride in 'im, and we'll git 'im to speechify for us arter dinner.

EVA.

Yes, father! [*Exit.*

STEER.

Coom along then, all the rest o' ye! Churchwarden be a coomin, thaw me and 'im we niver 'grees about the tithe; and Parson mebbe, thaw he niver mended that gap i' the glebe fence as I telled 'im; and Blacksmith, thaw he niver shoes a herse to my likings; and Baäker, thaw I sticks to hoäm-maäde—but all on 'em welcome, all on 'em welcome; and I've hed the long barn cleared out of all the machines, and the sacks, and the taäters, and the mangles, and theer'll be room anew for all o' ye. Foller me.

ALL.

Yeas, yeas! Three cheers for Mr. Steer!

[*All exeunt except* DOBSON *into barn.*

Enter EDGAR.

DOBSON (*who is going, turns*).

Squire!—if so be you be a squire.

EDGAR.

Dobbins, I think.

DOBSON.

Dobbins, you thinks; and I thinks ye weärs a Lunnun boot.

EDGAR.

Well?

DOBSON.

And I thinks I'd like to taäke the measure o' your foot.

EDGAR.

Ay, if you'd like to measure your own length upon the grass.

DOBSON.

Coom, coom, that's a good un. Why, I could throw four o' ye; but I promised one of the Misses I wouldn't meddle wi' ye, and I weänt. [*Exit into barn.*

EDGAR.

Jealous of me with Eva! Is it so?
Well, tho' I grudge the pretty jewel, that I
Have worn, to such a clod, yet that might be
The best way out of it, if the child could keep
Her counsel. I am sure I wish her happy.
But I must free myself from this entanglement.
I have all my life before me—so has she—
Give her a month or two, and her affections
Will flower toward the light in some new face.
Still I am half-afraid to meet her now.
She will urge marriage on me. I hate tears.
Marriage is but an old tradition. I hate
Traditions, ever since my narrow father,
After my frolic with his tenant's girl,

Made younger elder son, violated the whole
Tradition of our land, and left his heir,
Born, happily, with some sense of art, to live
By brush and pencil. By and by, when Thought
Comes down among the crowd, and man perceives that
The lost gleam of an after-life but leaves him
A beast of prey in the dark, why then the crowd
May wreak my wrongs upon my wrongers. Marriage!
That fine, fat, hook-nosed uncle of mine, old Harold,
Who leaves me all his land at Littlechester,
He, too, would oust me from his will, if I
Made such a marriage. And marriage in itself—
The storm is hard at hand will sweep away
Thrones, churches, ranks, traditions, customs, marriage
One of the feeblest! Then the man, the woman,
Following their best affinities, will each
Bid their old bond farewell with smiles, not tears;
Good wishes, not reproaches; with no fear
Of the world's gossiping clamour, and no need
Of veiling their desires.
Conventionalism,
Who shrieks by day at what she does by night,
Would call this vice; but one time's vice may be
The virtue of another; and Vice and Virtue
Are but two masks of self; and what hereafter
Shall mark out Vice from Virtue in the gulf
Of never-dawning darkness?

Enter EVA.

My sweet Eva,
Where have you lain in ambush all the morning?
They say your sister, Dora, has return'd,
And that should make you happy, if you love her!
But you look troubled.

EVA.

Oh, I love her so,
I was afraid of her, and I hid myself.
We never kept a secret from each other;
She would have seen at once into my trouble,
And ask'd me what I could not answer. Oh, Philip,
Father heard you last night. Our savage mastiff,
That all but kill'd the beggar, will be placed
Beneath the window, Philip.

EDGAR.

Savage, is he?
What matters? Come, give me your hand and kiss me
This beautiful May-morning.

EVA.

The most beautiful
May we have had for many years!

EDGAR.

And here
Is the most beautiful morning of this May.

Nay, you must smile upon me! There—you make
The May and morning still more beautiful,
You, the most beautiful blossom of the May.

EVA.

Dear Philip, all the world is beautiful
If we were happy, and could chime in with it.

EDGAR.

True; for the senses, love, are for the world;
That for the senses.

EVA.

Yes.

EDGAR.

And when the man,
The child of evolution, flings aside
His swaddling-bands, the morals of the tribe,
He, following his own instincts as his God,
Will enter on the larger golden age;
No pleasure then taboo'd: for when the tide
Of full democracy has overwhelm'd
This Old world, from that flood will rise the New,
Like the Love-goddess, with no bridal veil,
Ring, trinket of the Church, but naked Nature
In all her loveliness.

EVA.

What are you saying?

EDGAR.

That, if we did not strain to make ourselves
Better and higher than Nature, we might be
As happy as the bees there at their honey
In these sweet blossoms.

EVA.

Yes; how sweet they smell!

EDGAR.

There! let me break some off for you.

[*Breaking branch off.*

EVA.

My thanks.
But, look, how wasteful of the blossom you are!
One, two, three, four, five, six—you have robb'd
poor father
Of ten good apples. Oh, I forgot to tell you
He wishes you to dine along with us,
And speak for him after—you that are so clever!

EDGAR.

I grieve I cannot; but, indeed——

EVA.

What is it?

EDGAR.

Well, business. I must leave you, love, to-day.

EVA.

Leave me, to-day! And when will you return?

EDGAR.

I cannot tell precisely; but——

EVA.

But what?

EDGAR.

I trust, my dear, we shall be always friends.

EVA.

After all that has gone between us—friends!
What, only friends? [*Drops branch.*

EDGAR.

All that has gone between us
Should surely make us friends.

EVA.

But keep us lovers.

EDGAR.

Child, do you love me now?

EVA.

Yes, now and ever.

EDGAR.

Then you should wish us both to love for ever.

But, if you *will* bind love to one for ever,
Altho' at first he take his bonds for flowers,
As years go on, he feels them press upon him,
Begins to flutter in them, and at last
Breaks thro' them, and so flies away for ever;
While, had you left him free use of his wings,
Who knows that he had ever dream'd of flying?

EVA.

But all that sounds so wicked and so strange;
'Till death us part'—those are the only words,
The true ones—nay, and those not true enough,
For they that love do not believe that death
Will part them. Why do you jest with me, and try
To fright me? Tho' you are a gentleman,
I but a farmer's daughter——

EDGAR.

Tut! you talk
Old feudalism. When the great Democracy
Makes a new world——

EVA.

And if you be not jesting,
Neither the old world, nor the new, nor father,
Sister, nor you, shall ever see me more.

EDGAR (*moved*).

Then—(*aside*) Shall I say it?—(*aloud*) fly with me
to-day.

EVA.

No! Philip, Philip, if you do not marry me,
I shall go mad for utter shame and die.

EDGAR.

Then, if we needs must be conventional,
When shall your parish-parson bawl our banns
Before your gaping clowns?

EVA.

Not in our church—
I think I scarce could hold my head up there.
Is there no other way?

EDGAR.

Yes, if you cared
To fee an over-opulent superstition,
Then they would grant you what they call a licence
To marry. Do you wish it?

EVA.

Do I wish it?

EDGAR.

In London.

EVA.

You will write to me?

EDGAR.

I will.

EVA.

And I will fly to you thro' the night, the storm—
Yes, tho' the fire should run along the ground,
As once it did in Egypt. Oh, you see,
I was just out of school, I had no mother—
My sister far away—and you, a gentleman,
Told me to trust you: yes, in everything—
That was the only *true* love; and I trusted—
Oh, yes, indeed, I would have died for you.
How could you—Oh, how could you?—nay, how could I?
But now you will set all right again, and I
Shall not be made the laughter of the village,
And poor old father not die miserable.

DORA (*singing in the distance*).

'O joy for the promise of May, of May,
O joy for the promise of May.'

EDGAR.

Speak not so loudly; that must be your sister.
You never told her, then, of what has past
Between us.

EVA.

Never!

EDGAR.

Do not till I bid you.

EVA.

No, Philip, no. [*Turns away.*

EDGAR (*moved*).

How gracefully there she stands
Weeping—the little Niobe! What! we prize
The statue or the picture all the more
When we have made them ours! Is she less loveable,
Less lovely, being wholly mine? To stay—
Follow my art among these quiet fields.
Live with these honest folk——
And play the fool!
No! she that gave herself to me so easily
Will yield herself as easily to another.

EVA.

Did you speak, Philip?

EDGAR.

Nothing more, farewell.

[*They embrace.*

DORA (*coming nearer*).

'O grief for the promise of May, of May,
O grief for the promise of May.'

EDGAR (*still embracing her*).

Keep up your heart until we meet again.

EVA.

If that should break before we meet again?

EDGAR.

Break! nay, but call for Philip when you will,
And he returns.

EVA.

Heaven hears you, Philip Edgar!

EDGAR (*moved*).

And *he* would hear you even from the grave.
Heaven curse him if he come not at your call!

[*Exit.*

Enter DORA.

DORA.

Well, Eva!

EVA.

Oh, Dora, Dora, how long you have been away from home! Oh, how often I have wished for you! It seemed to me that we were parted for ever.

DORA.

For ever, you foolish child! What's come over you? We parted like the brook yonder about the alder island, to come together again in a moment and to go on together again, till one of us be married. But where is this Mr. Edgar whom you praised so in

your first letters? You haven't even mentioned him in your last?

EVA.

He has gone to London.

DORA.

Ay, child; and you look thin and pale. Is it for his absence? Have you fancied yourself in love with him? That's all nonsense, you know, such a baby as you are. But you shall tell me all about it.

EVA.

Not now—presently. Yes, I have been in trouble, but I am happy—I think, quite happy now.

DORA (*taking* EVA's *hand*).

Come, then, and make them happy in the long barn, for father is in his glory, and there is a piece of beef like a house-side, and a plum-pudding as big as the round haystack. But see they are coming out for the dance already. Well, my child, let us join them.

Enter all from barn laughing. EVA *sits reluctantly under apple tree.* STEER *enters smoking, sits by* EVA.

Dance.

ACT II.

Five years have elapsed between Acts I. and II.

SCENE.—*A meadow. On one side a pathway going over a rustic bridge. At back the farmhouse among trees. In the distance a church spire.*

DOBSON *and* DORA.

DOBSON.

So the owd uncle i' Coomberland be deäd, Miss Dora, beänt he?

DORA.

Yes, Mr. Dobson, I've been attending on his death-bed and his burial.

DOBSON.

It be five year sin' ye went afoor to him, and it seems to me nobbut t'other day. Hesn't he left ye nowt?

DORA.

No, Mr. Dobson.

DOBSON.

But he were mighty fond o' ye, warn't he?

DORA.

Fonder of poor Eva—like everybody else.

DOBSON (*handing* DORA *basket of roses*).

Not like me, Miss Dora; and I ha' browt these roses to ye—I forgits what they calls 'em, but I hallus gi'ed soom on 'em to Miss Eva at this time o' year. Will ya taäke 'em? fur Miss Eva, she set the bush by my dairy winder afoor she went to school at Littlechester—so I allus browt soom on 'em to her; and now she be gone, will ye taäke 'em, Miss Dora?

DORA.

I thank you. They tell me that yesterday you mentioned her name too suddenly before my father. See that you do not do so again!

DOBSON.

Noä; I knaws a deäl better now. I seed how the owd man wur vext.

DORA.

I take them, then, for Eva's sake.

[*Takes basket, places some in her dress.*

DOBSON.

Eva's saäke. Yeas. Poor gel, poor gel! I can't abeär to think on 'er now, fur I'd ha' done owt fur 'er mysen; an' ony o' Steer's men, an' ony o' my men 'ud ha' done owt fur 'er, an' all the parish 'ud ha' done owt fur 'er, fur we was all on us proud on 'er, an' them theer be soom of her oän roses, an' she wur as sweet as ony on 'em—the Lord bless 'er—'er oän sen; an' weänt ye taäke 'em now, Miss Dora, fur 'er saäke an' fur my saäke an' all?

DORA.

Do you want them back again?

DOBSON.

Noä, noä! Keep 'em. But I hed a word to saäy to ye.

DORA.

Why, Farmer, you should be in the hayfield looking after your men; you couldn't have more splendid weather.

DOBSON.

I be a going theer; but I thowt I'd bring tha them roses fust. The weather's well anew, but the glass be a bit shaäky. S'iver we've led moäst on it.

DORA.

Ay! but you must not be too sudden with it either,

as you were last year, when you put it in green, and your stack caught fire.

DOBSON.

I were insured, Miss, an' I lost nowt by it. But I weänt be too sudden wi' it; and I feel sewer, Miss Dora, that I ha' been noän too sudden wi' you, fur I ha' sarved for ye well nigh as long as the man sarved for 'is sweet'art i' Scriptur'. Weänt ye gi'e me a kind answer at last?

DORA.

I have no thought of marriage, my friend. We have been in such grief these five years, not only on my sister's account, but the ill success of the farm, and the debts, and my father's breaking down, and his blindness. How could I think of leaving him?

DOBSON.

Eh, but I be well to do; and if ye would nobbut hev me, I would taäke the owd blind man to my oän fireside. You should hev him allus wi' ye.

DORA.

You are generous, but it cannot be. I cannot love you; nay, I think I never can be brought to love any man. It seems to me that I hate men, ever since my sister left us. Oh, see here. (*Pulls out a letter.*) I wear it next my heart. Poor sister, I had it five years ago. 'Dearest Dora,—I have lost myself, and am lost

for ever to you and my poor father. I thought Mr. Edgar the best of men, and he has proved himself the worst. Seek not for me, or you may find me at the bottom of the river.—EVA.'

DOBSON.

Be that my fault?

DORA.

No; but how should I, with this grief still at my heart, take to the milking of your cows, the fatting of your calves, the making of your butter, and the managing of your poultry?

DOBSON.

Naäy, but I hev an owd woman as 'ud see to all that; and you should sit i' your oän parlour quite like a laädy, ye should!

DORA.

It cannot be.

DOBSON.

And plaäy the pianner, if ye liked, all daäy long, like a laädy, ye should an' all.

DORA.

It cannot be.

DOBSON.

And I would loove tha moor nor ony gentleman 'ud loove tha.

DORA.

No, no; it cannot be.

DOBSON.

And p'raps ye hears 'at I soomtimes taäkes a drop too much; but that be all along o' you, Miss, because ye weänt hev me; but, if ye would, I could put all that o' one side eäsy anew.

DORA.

Cannot you understand plain words, Mr. Dobson? I tell you, it cannot be.

DOBSON.

Eh, lass! Thy feyther eddicated his darters to marry gentlefoälk, and see what's coomed on it.

DORA.

That is enough, Farmer Dobson. You have shown me that, though fortune had born *you* into the estate of a gentleman, you would still have been Farmer Dobson. You had better attend to your hayfield. Good afternoon. [*Exit.*

DOBSON.

'Farmer Dobson'! Well, I be Farmer Dobson; but I thinks Farmer Dobson's dog 'ud ha' knaw'd better nor to cast her sister's misfortin inter 'er teeth arter she'd been a-reädin' me the letter wi' 'er voice a-

shaäkin', and the drop in 'er eye. Theer she goäs! Shall I foller 'er and ax 'er to maäke it up? Noä, not yet. Let 'er cool upon it; I likes 'er all the better fur taäkin' me down, like a laädy, as she be. Farmer Dobson! I be Farmer Dobson, sewer anew; but if iver I cooms upo' Gentleman Hedgar ageän, and doänt laäy my cartwhip athurt 'is shou'ders, why then I beänt Farmer Dobson, but summun else—blaäme't if I beänt!

Enter HAYMAKERS *with a load of hay.*

The last on it, eh?

1ST HAYMAKER.

Yeas.

DOBSON.

Hoäm wi' it, then. [*Exit surlily.*

1ST HAYMAKER.

Well, it be the last loäd hoäm.

2ND HAYMAKER.

Yeas, an' owd Dobson should be glad on it. What maäkes 'im allus sa glum?

SALLY ALLEN.

Glum! he be wus nor glum. He coom'd up to me yisterdaäy i' the haäyfield, when meä and my sweet'art was a workin' along o' one side wi' one another, and

he sent 'im awaäy to t'other end o' the field; and when I axed 'im why, he telled me 'at sweet'arts niver worked well togither; and I telled *'im* 'at sweet'arts allus worked best togither; and then he called me a rude naäme, and I can't abide 'im.

JAMES.

Why, lass, doänt tha knaw he be sweet upo' Dora Steer, and she weänt sa much as look at 'im? And wheniver 'e sees two sweet'arts togither like thou and me, Sally, he be fit to bust hissen wi' spites and jalousies.

SALLY.

Let 'im bust hissen, then, for owt *I* cares.

1ST HAYMAKER.

Well but, as I said afoor, it be the last loäd hoäm; do thou and thy sweet'art sing us hoäm to supper—'The Last Loäd Hoäm.'

ALL.

Ay! 'The Last Loäd Hoäm.'

Song.

What did ye do, and what did ye saäy,
Wi' the wild white rose, an' the woodbine sa gaäy,
An' the midders all mow'd, an' the sky sa blue—
What did ye saäy, and what did ye do,
When ye thowt there were nawbody watchin' o' you,
And you an' your Sally was forkin' the haäy,

At the end of the daäy,
For the last loäd hoäm?

What did we do, and what did we saäy,
Wi' the briar sa green, an' the willer sa graäy,
An' the midders all mow'd, an' the sky sa blue—
Do ye think I be gawin' to tell it to you,
What we mowt saäy, and what we mowt do,
When me an' my Sally was forkin' the haäy,
At the end of the daäy,
For the last loäd hoäm?

But what did ye saäy, and what did ye do,
Wi' the butterflies out, and the swallers at plaäy,
An' the midders all mow'd, an' the sky sa blue?
Why, coom then, owd feller, I'll tell it to you;
For me an' my Sally we sweär'd to be true,
To be true to each other, let 'appen what maäy,
Till the end of the daäy
And the last loäd hoäm.

ALL.

Well sung!

JAMES.

Fanny be the naäme i' the song, but I swopt it fur *she.* [*Pointing to* SALLY.

SALLY.

Let ma aloän afoor foälk, wilt tha?

1ST HAYMAKER.

Ye shall sing that ageän to-night, fur owd Dobson 'll gi'e us a bit o' supper.

SALLY.

I weänt goä to owd Dobson; he wur rude to me i' tha haäyfield, and he'll be rude to me ageän to-night. Owd Steer's gotten all his grass down and wants a hand, and I'll goä to him.

1ST HAYMAKER.

Owd Steer gi'es nubbut cowd tea to *'is* men, and owd Dobson gi'es beer.

SALLY.

But I'd like owd Steer's cowd tea better nor Dobson's beer. Good-bye. [*Going.*

JAMES.

Gi'e us a buss fust, lass.

SALLY.

I tell'd tha to let ma aloän!

JAMES.

Why, wasn't thou and me a-bussin' o' one another t'other side o' the haäycock, when owd Dobson coom'd upo' us? I can't let tha aloän if I would, Sally.

[*Offering to kiss her.*

SALLY.

Git along wi' ye, do ! [*Exit.*

[*All laugh ; exeunt singing.*

'To be true to each other, let 'appen what maäy,
Till the end o' the daäy
An' the last loäd hoäm.'

Enter HAROLD.

HAROLD.

Not Harold ! 'Philip Edgar, Philip Edgar !'
Her phantom call'd me by the name she loved.
I told her I should hear her from the grave.
Ay ! yonder is her casement. I remember
Her bright face beaming starlike down upon me
Thro' that rich cloud of blossom. Since I left her
Here weeping, I have ranged the world, and sat
Thro' every sensual course of that full feast
That leaves but emptiness.

Song.

'To be true to each other, let 'appen what maäy,
To the end o' the daäy
An' the last loäd hoäm.'

HAROLD.

Poor Eva ! O my God, if man be only
A willy-nilly current of sensations—
Reaction needs must follow revel—yet—

Why feel remorse, he, knowing that he *must* have
Moved in the iron grooves of Destiny?
Remorse then is a part of Destiny,
Nature a liar, making us feel guilty
Of her own faults.

My grandfather—of him
They say, that women—

O this mortal house,
Which we are born into, is haunted by
The ghosts of the dead passions of dead men;
And these take flesh again with our own flesh,
And bring us to confusion.

He was only
A poor philosopher who call'd the mind
Of children a blank page, a *tabula rasa.*
There, there, is written in invisible inks
'Lust, Prodigality, Covetousness, Craft,
Cowardice, Murder'—and the heat and fire
Of life will bring them out, and black enough,
So the child grow to manhood: better death
With our first wail than life—

Song (*further off*).

'Till the end o' the daäy
An' the last loäd hoäm,
Loäd hoäm.'

This bridge again! (*Steps on the bridge.*)
How often have I stood
With Eva here! The brook among its flowers!
Forget-me-not, meadowsweet, willow-herb.

I had some smattering of science then,
Taught her the learned names, anatomized
The flowers for her—and now I only wish
This pool were deep enough, that I might plunge
And lose myself for ever.

Enter DAN SMITH (*singing*).

Gee oop! whoä! Gee oop! whoä!
Scizzars an' Pumpy was good uns to goä
Thruf slush an' squad
When roäds was bad,
But hallus ud stop at the Vine-an'-the-Hop,
Fur boäth on 'em knaw'd as well as mysen
That beer be as good fur 'erses as men.
Gee oop! whoä! Gee oop! whoä!
Scizzars an' Pumpy was good uns to goä.

The beer's gotten oop into my 'eäd. S'iver I mun git along back to the farm, fur she tell'd ma to taäke the cart to Littlechester.

Enter DORA.

Half an hour late! why are you loitering here?
Away with you at once. [*Exit* DAN SMITH.

(*Seeing* HAROLD *on bridge.*)

Some madman, is it,
Gesticulating there upon the bridge?
I am half afraid to pass.

HAROLD.

Sometimes I wonder,
When man has surely learnt at last that all
His old-world faith, the blossom of his youth,
Has faded, falling fruitless—whether then
All of us, all at once, may not be seized
With some fierce passion, not so much for Death
As against Life! all, all, into the dark—
No more!—and science now could drug and balm us
Back into nescience with as little pain
As it is to fall asleep.
This beggarly life,
This poor, flat, hedged-in field—no distance—this
Hollow Pandora-box,
With all the pleasures flown, not even Hope
Left at the bottom!
Superstitious fool,
What brought me here? To see her grave? her ghost?
Her ghost is everyway about me here.

DORA (*coming forward*).

Allow me, sir, to pass you.

HAROLD.

Eva!

DORA.

Eva!

HAROLD.

What are you? Where do you come from?

DORA.

From the farm
Here, close at hand.

HAROLD.

Are you—you are—that Dora,
The sister. I have heard of you. The likeness
Is very striking.

DORA.

You knew Eva, then?

HAROLD.

Yes—I was thinking of her when—O yes,
Many years back, and never since have met
Her equal for pure innocence of nature,
And loveliness of feature.

DORA.

No, nor I.

HAROLD.

Except, indeed, I have found it once again
In your own self.

DORA.

You flatter me. Dear Eva
Was always thought the prettier.

HAROLD.

And *her* charm
Of voice is also yours; and I was brooding
Upon a great unhappiness when you spoke.

DORA.

Indeed, you seem'd in trouble, sir.

HAROLD.

And you
Seem my good angel who may help me from it.

DORA (*aside*).

How worn he looks, poor man! who is it, I wonder.
How can I help him? (*Aloud.*) Might I ask your name?

HAROLD.

Harold.

DORA.

I never heard her mention you.

HAROLD.

I met her first at a farm in Cumberland—
Her uncle's.

DORA.

She was there six years ago.

HAROLD.

And if she never mention'd me, perhaps

The painful circumstances which I heard—
I will not vex you by repeating them—
Only last week at Littlechester, drove me
From out her memory. She has disappear'd,
They told me, from the farm—and darker news.

DORA.

She has disappear'd, poor darling, from the world—
Left but one dreadful line to say, that we
Should find her in the river; and we dragg'd
The Littlechester river all in vain:
Have sorrow'd for her all these years in vain.
And my poor father, utterly broken down
By losing her—she was his favourite child—
Has let his farm, all his affairs, I fear,
But for the slender help that I can give,
Fall into ruin. Ah! that villain, Edgar,
If he should ever show his face among us,
Our men and boys would hoot him, stone him, hunt
him
With pitchforks off the farm, for all of them
Loved her, and she was worthy of all love.

HAROLD.

They say, we should forgive our enemies.

DORA.

Ay, if the wretch were dead I might forgive him;
We know not whether he be dead or living.

HAROLD.

What Edgar?

DORA.

Philip Edgar of Toft Hall
In Somerset. Perhaps you know him?

HAROLD.

Slightly.
(*Aside.*) Ay, for how slightly have I known myself.

DORA.

This Edgar, then, is living?

HAROLD.

Living? well—
One Philip Edgar of Toft Hall in Somerset
Is lately dead.

DORA.

Dead!—is there more than one?

HAROLD.

Nay—now—not one, (*aside*) for I am Philip Harold.

DORA.

That one, is he then—dead!

HAROLD.

(*Aside.*) My father's death,

Let her believe it mine; this, for the moment,
Will leave me a free field.

DORA.

Dead! and this world
Is brighter for his absence as that other
Is darker for his presence.

HAROLD.

Is not this
To speak too pitilessly of the dead?

DORA.

My five-years' anger cannot die at once,
Not all at once with death and him. I trust
I shall forgive him—by-and-by—not now.
O sir, you seem to have a heart; if you
Had seen us that wild morning when we found
Her bed unslept in, storm and shower lashing
Her casement, her poor spaniel wailing for her,
That desolate letter, blotted with her tears,
Which told us we should never see her more—
Our old nurse crying as if for her own child,
My father stricken with his first paralysis,
And then with blindness—had you been one of us
And seen all this, then you would know it is not
So easy to forgive—even the dead.

HAROLD.

But sure am I that of your gentleness
You will forgive him. She, you mourn for, seem'd
A miracle of gentleness—would not blur
A moth's wing by the touching; would not crush
The fly that drew her blood; and, were she living,
Would not—if penitent—have denied him *her*
Forgiveness. And perhaps the man himself,
When hearing of that piteous death, has suffer'd
More than we know. But wherefore waste your heart
In looking on a chill and changeless Past?
Iron will fuse, and marble melt; the Past
Remains the Past. But you are young, and—pardon
me—
As lovely as your sister. Who can tell
What golden hours, with what full hands, may be
Waiting you in the distance? Might I call
Upon your father—I have seen the world—
And cheer his blindness with a traveller's tales?

DORA.

Call if you will, and when you will. I cannot
Well answer for my father; but if you
Can tell me anything of our sweet Eva
When in her brighter girlhood, I at least
Will bid you welcome, and will listen to you.
Now I must go.

HAROLD.

But give me first your hand:

I do not dare, like an old friend, to shake it.
I kiss it as a prelude to that privilege
When you shall know me better.

DORA.

(*Aside.*) How beautiful
His manners are, and how unlike the farmer's!
You are staying here?

HAROLD.

Yes, at the wayside inn
Close by that alder-island in your brook,
'The Angler's Home.'

DORA.

Are *you* one?

HAROLD.

No, but I
Take some delight in sketching, and the country
Has many charms, altho' the inhabitants
Seem semi-barbarous.

DORA.

I am glad it pleases you;
Yet I, born here, not only love the country,
But its inhabitants too; and you, I doubt not,
Would take to them as kindly, if you cared
To live some time among them.

HAROLD.

If I did,

Then one at least of its inhabitants
Might have more charm for me than all the country.

DORA.

That one, then, should be grateful for your preference.

HAROLD.

I cannot tell, tho' standing in her presence.
(*Aside.*) She colours!

DORA.

Sir!

HAROLD.

Be not afraid of me,
For these are no conventional flourishes.
I do most earnestly assure you that
Your likeness—— [*Shouts and cries without.*

DORA.

What was that? my poor blind father—

Enter FARMING MAN.

FARMING MAN.

Miss Dora, Dan Smith's cart hes runned ower a laädy i' the holler laäne, and they ha' ta'en the body up inter your chaumber, and they be all a-callin' for ye.

DORA.

The body!—Heavens! I come!

HAROLD.

But you are trembling.
Allow me to go with you to the farm. [*Exeunt.*

Enter DOBSON.

DOBSON.

What feller wur it as 'a' been a-talkin' fur haäfe an hour wi' my Dora? (*Looking after him.*) Seeäms I ommost knaws the back on 'im—drest like a gentleman, too. Damn all gentlemen, says I! I should ha' thowt they'd hed anew o' gentlefoälk, as I telled 'er to-daäy when she fell foul upo' me.

Minds ma o' summun. I could sweär to that; but that be all one, fur I haätes 'im afoor I knaws what 'e be. Theer! he turns round. Philip Hedgar o' Soomerset! Philip Hedgar o' Soomerset!—Noä—yeas—thaw the feller's gone and maäde such a litter of his faäce.

Eh lad, if it be thou, I'll Philip tha! a-plaäyin' the saäme gaäme wi' my Dora—I'll Soomerset tha.

I'd like to drag 'im thruff the herse-pond, and she to be a-lookin' at it. I'd like to leather 'im black and blue, and she to be a-laughin' at it. I'd like to fell 'im as deäd as a bullock! (*Clenching his fist.*)

But what 'ud she saäy to that? She telled me once

not to meddle wi' 'im, and now she be fallen out wi' ma, and I can't coom at 'er.

It mun be *him*. Noä! Fur she'd niver 'a been talkin' haäfe an hour wi' the divil 'at killed her oän sister, or she beänt Dora Steer.

Yeas! Fur she niver knawed 'is faäce when 'e wur 'ere afoor; but I'll maäke 'er knaw! I'll maäke 'er knaw!

Enter HAROLD.

Naäy, but I mun git out on 'is waäy now, or I shall be the death on 'im. [*Exit.*

HAROLD.

How the clown glared at me! that Dobbins, is it,
With whom I used to jar? but can he trace me
Thro' five years' absence, and my change of name,
The tan of southern summers and the beard?
I may as well avoid him.
Ladylike!
Lilylike in her stateliness and sweetness!
How came she by it?—a daughter of the fields,
This Dora!
She gave her hand, unask'd, at the farm-gate;
I almost think she half return'd the pressure
Of mine. What, I that held the orange blossom
Dark as the yew? but may not those, who march
Before their age, turn back at times, and make
Courtesy to custom? and now the stronger motive,
Misnamed free-will—the crowd would call it conscience—

Moves me—to what? I am dreaming; for the past
Look'd thro' the present, Eva's eyes thro' her's—
A spell upon me! Surely I loved Eva
More than I knew! or is it but the past
That brightens in retiring? Oh, last night,
Tired, pacing my new lands at Littlechester,
I dozed upon the bridge, and the black river
Flow'd thro' my dreams—if dreams they were. She rose
From the foul flood and pointed toward the farm,
And her cry rang to me across the years,
'I call you, Philip Edgar, Philip Edgar!
Come, you will set all right again, and father
Will not die miserable.' I could make his age
A comfort to him—so be more at peace
With mine own self. Some of my former friends
Would find my logic faulty; let them. Colour
Flows thro' my life again, and I have lighted
On a new pleasure. Anyhow we must
Move in the line of least resistance when
The stronger motive rules.
But she hates Edgar.
May not this Dobbins, or some other, spy
Edgar in Harold? Well then, I must make her
Love Harold first, and then she will forgive
Edgar for Harold's sake. She said herself
She would forgive him, by-and-by, not now—
For her own sake *then*, if not for mine—not now—
But by-and-by.

Enter DOBSON *behind.*

DOBSON.

By-and-by—eh, lad, dosta knaw this paäper? Ye dropt it upo' the road. 'Philip Edgar, Esq.' Ay, you be a pretty squire. I ha' fun' ye out, I hev. Eh, lad, dosta knaw what tha meäns wi' by-and-by? Fur if ye be goin' to sarve our Dora as ye sarved our Eva—then, by-and-by, if she weänt listen to me when I be a-tryin' to saäve 'er—if she weänt—look to thysen, for, by the Lord, I'd think na moor o' maäkin' an end o' tha nor a carrion craw—noä—thaw they hanged ma at 'Size fur it.

HAROLD.

Dobbins, I think!

DOBSON.

I beänt Dobbins.

HAROLD.

Nor am I Edgar, my good fellow.

DOBSON.

Tha lies! What hasta been saäyin' to *my* Dora?

HAROLD.

I have been telling her of the death of one Philip Edgar of Toft Hall, Somerset.

DOBSON.

Tha lies!

HAROLD (*pulling out a newspaper*).

Well, my man, it seems that you can read. Look there—under the deaths.

DOBSON.

'O' the 17th, Philip Edgar, o' Toft Hall, Soomerset.' How coom thou to be sa like 'im, then?

HAROLD.

Naturally enough; for I am closely related to the dead man's family.

DOBSON.

An 'ow coom thou by the letter to 'im?

HAROLD.

Naturally again; for as I used to transact all his business for him, I had to look over his letters. Now then, see these (*takes out letters*). Half a score of them, all directed to me—Harold.

DOBSON.

'Arold! 'Arold! 'Arold, so they be.

HAROLD.

My name is Harold! Good day, Dobbins!

[*Exit.*

DOBSON.

'Arold! The feller's cleän daäzed, an' maäzed, an' maäted, an' muddled ma. Deäd! It mun be true, fur it wur i' print as black as owt. Naäy, but 'Good daäy, Dobbins.' Why, that wur the very twang on 'im. Eh, lad, but whether thou be Hedgar, or Hedgar's business man, thou hesn't naw business 'ere wi' *my* Dora, as I knaws on, an' whether thou calls thysen Hedgar or Harold, if thou stick to she I'll stick to thee —stick to tha like a weasel to a rabbit, I will. Ay! and I'd like to shoot tha like a rabbit an' all. 'Good daäy, Dobbins.' Dang tha!

ACT III.

SCENE.—*A room in* STEER'S *House. Door leading into bedroom at the back.*

DORA (*ringing a handbell*).

Milly!

Enter MILLY.

MILLY.

The little 'ymn? Yeäs, Miss; but I wur so ta'en up wi' leädin' the owd man about all the blessed murnin' 'at I ha' nobbut larned mysen haäfe on it.

'O man, forgive thy mortal foe,
Nor ever strike him blow for blow;
For all the souls on earth that live
To be forgiven must forgive.
Forgive him seventy times and seven:
For all the blessed souls in Heaven
Are both forgivers and forgiven.'

But I'll git the book ageän, and larn mysen the rest, and saäy it to ye afoor dark; ye ringed fur that, Miss, didn't ye?

DORA.

No, Milly; but if the farming-men be come for their wages, to send them up to me.

MILLY.

Yeäs, Miss. [*Exit.*

DORA (*sitting at desk counting money*).

Enough at any rate for the present. (*Enter* FARMING MEN.) Good afternoon, my friends. I am sorry Mr. Steer still continues too unwell to attend to you, but the schoolmaster looked to the paying you your wages when I was away, didn't he?

MEN.

Yeäs; and thanks to ye.

DORA.

Some of our workmen have left us, but he sent me an alphabetical list of those that remain, so, Allen, I may as well begin with you.

ALLEN (*with his hand to his ear*).

Halfabitical! Taäke one o' the young 'uns fust, Miss, fur I be a bit deaf, and I wur hallus scaäred by a big word; leästwaäys, I should be wi' a lawyer.

DORA.

I spoke of your names, Allen, as they are arranged here (*shows book*)—according to their first letters.

ALLEN.

Letters! Yeas, I sees now. Them be what they larns the childer' at school, but I were burn afoor schoolin-time.

DORA.

But, Allen, tho' you can't read, you could whitewash that cottage of yours where your grandson had the fever.

ALLEN.

I'll hev it done o' Monday.

DORA.

Else if the fever spread, the parish will have to thank you for it.

ALLEN.

Meä? why, it be the Lord's doin', noän o' mine; d'ye think *I'd* gi'e 'em the fever? But I thanks ye all the saäme, Miss. (*Takes money.*)

DORA (*calling out names*).

Higgins, Jackson, Luscombe, Nokes, Oldham, Skipworth! (*All take money.*) Did you find that you worked at all the worse upon the cold tea than you would have done upon the beer?

HIGGINS.

Noä, Miss; we worked naw wuss upo' the cowd tea; but we'd ha' worked better upo' the beer.

DORA.

Come, come, you worked well enough, and I am much obliged to all of you. There's for you, and you, and you. Count the money and see if it's all right.

MEN.

All right, Miss; and thank ye kindly.

[*Exeunt* LUSCOMBE, NOKES, OLDHAM, SKIPWORTH.

DORA.

Dan Smith, my father and I forgave you stealing our coals. [DAN SMITH *advances to* DORA.

DAN SMITH (*bellowing*).

Whoy, O lor, Miss! that wur sa long back, and the walls sa thin, and the winders brokken, and the weather sa cowd, and my missus a-gittin' ower 'er lyin'-in.

DORA.

Didn't I say that we had forgiven you? But, Dan Smith, they tell me that you—and you have six children—spent all your last Saturday's wages at the ale-

house; that you were stupid drunk all Sunday, and so ill in consequence all Monday, that you did not come into the hayfield. Why should I pay you your full wages?

DAN SMITH.

I be ready to taäke the pledge.

DORA.

And as ready to break it again. Besides it was you that were driving the cart—and I fear you were tipsy then, too—when you lamed the lady in the hollow lane.

DAN SMITH (*bellowing*).

O lor, Miss! noä, noä, noä! Ye sees the holler laäne be hallus sa dark i' the arternoon, and wheere the big eshtree cuts athurt it, it gi'es a turn like, and 'ow should I see to laäme the laädy, and meä coomin' along pretty sharp an' all?

DORA.

Well, there are your wages; the next time you waste them at a pothouse you get no more from me. (*Exit* DAN SMITH.) Sally Allen, you worked for Mr. Dobson, didn't you?

SALLY (*advancing*).

Yeäs, Miss; but he wur so rough wi' ma, I couldn't abide 'im.

DORA.

Why should he be rough with you? You are as good as a man in the hayfield. What's become of your brother?

SALLY.

'Listed for a soädger, Miss, i' the Queen's Real Hard Tillery.

DORA.

And your sweetheart—when are you and he to be married?

SALLY.

At Michaelmas, Miss, please God.

DORA.

You are an honest pair. I will come to your wedding.

SALLY.

An' I thanks ye fur that, Miss, moor nor fur the waäge.

(*Going—returns.*)

'A cotched ma about the waaist, Miss, when 'e wur 'ere afoor, an' axed ma to be 'is little sweet-art, an soä I knaw'd 'im when I seed 'im ageän an I telled feyther on 'im.

DORA.

What is all this, Allen?

ALLEN.

Why, Miss Dora, meä and my maätes, us three, we wants to hev three words wi' ye.

HIGGINS.

That be 'im, and meä, Miss.

JACKSON.

An' meä, Miss.

ALLEN.

An' we weänt mention naw naämes, we'd as lief talk o' the Divil afoor ye as 'im, fur they says the master goäs cleän off his 'eäd when he 'eärs the naäme on 'im; but us three, arter Sally'd telled us on 'im, we fun' 'im out a-walkin' i' West Field wi' a white 'at, nine o'clock, upo' Tuesday murnin', and all on us, wi' your leave, we wants to leather 'im.

DORA.

Who?

ALLEN.

Him as did the mischief here, five year' sin'.

DORA.

Mr. Edgar?

ALLEN.

Theer, Miss! You ha' naämed 'im—not me.

DORA.

He's dead, man—dead; gone to his account—dead and buried.

ALLEN.

I beänt sa sewer o' that, fur Sally knaw'd 'im; Now then?

DORA.

Yes; it was in the Somersetshire papers.

ALLEN.

Then yon mun be his brother, an' we'll leather *'im*.

DORA.

I never heard that he had a brother. Some foolish mistake of Sally's; but what! would you beat a man for his brother's fault? That were a wild justice indeed. Let bygones be bygones. Go home! Good-night! (*All exeunt.*) I have once more paid them all. The work of the farm will go on still, but for how long? We are almost at the bottom of the well: little more to be drawn from it—and what then? Encumbered as we are, who would lend us anything? We shall have to sell all the land, which Father, for a whole life, has been getting together, again, and that, I am sure, would be the death of him. What am I to do? Farmer Dobson, were I to marry him, has promised to keep our heads above water; and the man has doubtless a good heart, and a true and lasting love for me:

yet—though I can be sorry for him—as the good Sally says, 'I can't abide him'—almost brutal, and matched with my Harold is like a hedge thistle by a garden rose. But then, he, too—will he ever be of one faith with his wife? which is my dream of a true marriage. Can I fancy him kneeling with me, and uttering the same prayer; standing up side by side with me, and singing the same hymn? I fear not. Have I done wisely, then, in accepting him? But may not a girl's love-dream have too much romance in it to be realised all at once, or altogether, or anywhere but in Heaven? And yet I had once a vision of a pure and perfect marriage, where the man and the woman, only differing as the stronger and the weaker, should walk hand in hand together down this valley of tears, as they call it so truly, to the grave at the bottom, and lie down there together in the darkness which would seem but for a moment, to be wakened again together by the light of the resurrection, and no more partings for ever and for ever. (*Walks up and down. She sings.*)

'O happy lark, that warblest high
Above thy lowly nest,
O brook, that brawlest merrily by
Thro' fields that once were blest,
O tower spiring to the sky,
O graves in daisies drest,
O Love and Life, how weary am I,
And how I long for rest.'

There, there, I am a fool! Tears! I have sometimes

been moved to tears by a chapter of fine writing in a novel; but what have I to do with tears now? All depends on me—Father, this poor girl, the farm, everything; and they both love me—I am all in all to both; and he loves me too, I am quite sure of that. Courage, courage! and all will go well. (*Goes to bedroom door; opens it.*) How dark your room is! Let me bring you in here where there is still full daylight. (*Brings* Eva *forward.*) Why, you look better.

Eva.

And I feel so much better that I trust I may be able by-and-by to help you in the business of the farm; but I must not be known yet. Has anyone found me out, Dora?

Dora.

Oh, no; you kept your veil too close for that when they carried you in; since then, no one has seen you but myself.

Eva.

Yes—this Milly.

Dora.

Poor blind Father's little guide, Milly, who came to us three years after you were gone, how should she know you? But now that you have been brought to us as it were from the grave, dearest Eva, and have been here so long, will you not speak with Father to-day?

EVA.

Do you think that I may? No, not yet. I am not equal to it yet.

DORA.

Why? Do you still suffer from your fall in the hollow lane?

EVA.

Bruised; but no bones broken.

DORA.

I have always told Father that the huge old ashtree there would cause an accident some day; but he would never cut it down, because one of the Steers had planted it there in former times.

EVA.

If it had killed one of the Steers there the other day, it might have been better for her, for him, and for you.

DORA.

Come, come, keep a good heart! Better for me! That's good. How better for me?

EVA.

You tell me you have a lover. Will he not fly from you if he learn the story of my shame and that I am still living?

DORA.

No; I am sure that when we are married he will be willing that you and Father should live with us; for, indeed, he tells me that he met you once in the old times, and was much taken with you, my dear.

EVA.

Taken with me; who was he? Have you told him I am here?

DORA.

No; do you wish it?

EVA.

See, Dora; you yourself are ashamed of me (*weeps*), and I do not wonder at it.

DORA.

But I should wonder at myself if it were so. Have we not been all in all to one another from the time when we first peeped into the bird's nest, waded in the brook, ran after the butterflies, and prattled to each other that we would marry fine gentlemen, and played at being fine ladies?

EVA.

That last was my Father's fault, poor man. And this lover of yours—this Mr. Harold—is a gentleman?

DORA.

That he is, from head to foot. I do believe I lost

my heart to him the very first time we met, and I love him so much——

EVA.

Poor Dora!

DORA.

That I dare not tell him how much I love him.

EVA.

Better not. Has he offered you marriage, this gentleman?

DORA

Could I love him else?

EVA.

And are you quite sure that after marriage this gentleman will not be shamed of his poor farmer's daughter among the ladies in his drawing-room?

DORA.

Shamed of me in a drawing-room! Wasn't Miss Vavasour, our schoolmistress at Littlechester, a lady born? Were not our fellow-pupils all ladies? Wasn't dear mother herself at least by one side a lady? Can't I speak like a lady; pen a letter like a lady; talk a little French like a lady; play a little like a lady? Can't a girl when she loves her husband, and he her, make herself anything he wishes her to be? Shamed of me in a drawing-room, indeed! See here! 'I

hope your Lordship is quite recovered of your gout?' (*Curtsies.*) 'Will your Ladyship ride to cover to-day? (*Curtsies.*) I can recommend our Voltigeur.' 'I am sorry that we could not attend your Grace's party on the 10th!' (*Curtsies.*) There, I am glad my nonsense has made you smile!

EVA.

I have heard that 'your Lordship,' and 'your Ladyship,' and 'your Grace' are all growing old-fashioned!

DORA.

But the love of sister for sister can never be old-fashioned. I have been unwilling to trouble you with questions, but you seem somewhat better to-day. We found a letter in your bedroom torn into bits. I couldn't make it out. What was it?

EVA.

From him! from him! He said we had been most happy together, and he trusted that some time we should meet again, for he had not forgotten his promise to come when I called him. But that was a mockery, you know, for he gave me no address, and there was no word of marriage; and, O Dora, he signed himself 'Yours gratefully'—fancy, Dora, 'gratefully'! 'Yours gratefully'!

DORA.

Infamous wretch! (*Aside.*) Shall I tell her he is dead? No; she is still too feeble.

EVA.

Hark! Dora, some one is coming. I cannot and I will not see anybody.

DORA.

It is only Milly.

Enter MILLY, *with basket of roses.*

DORA.

Well, Milly, why do you come in so roughly? The sick lady here might have been asleep.

MILLY.

Pleäse, Miss, Mr. Dobson telled me to saäy he's browt some of Miss Eva's roses for the sick laädy to smell on.

DORA.

Take them, dear. Say that the sick lady thanks him! Is he here?

MILLY.

Yeäs, Miss; and he wants to speak to ye partic'lar.

DORA.

Tell him I cannot leave the sick lady just yet.

MILLY.

Yeäs, Miss; but he says he wants to tell ye summut very partic'lar.

DORA.

Not to-day. What are you staying for?

MILLY.

Why, Miss, I be afeard I shall set him a-sweäring like onythink.

DORA.

And what harm will that do you, so that you do not copy his bad manners? Go, child. (*Exit* MILLY.) But, Eva, why did you write 'Seek me at the bottom of the river'?

EVA.

Why? because I meant it!—that dreadful night! that lonely walk to Littlechester, the rain beating in my face all the way, dead midnight when I came upon the bridge; the river, black, slimy, swirling under me in the lamplight, by the rotten wharfs—but I was so mad, that I mounted upon the parapet——

DORA.

You make me shudder!

EVA.

To fling myself over, when I heard a voice, 'Girl, what are you doing there? It was a Sister of Mercy, come from the death-bed of a pauper, who had died in his misery blessing God, and the Sister took me to her

house, and bit by bit—for she promised secrecy—I told her all.

DORA.

And what then?

EVA.

She would have persuaded me to come back here, but I couldn't. Then she got me a place as nursery governess, and when the children grew too old for me, and I asked her once more to help me, once more she said, 'Go home;' but I hadn't the heart or face to do it. And then—what would Father say? I sank so low that I went into service—the drudge of a lodging-house—and when the mistress died, and I appealed to the Sister again, her answer—I think I have it about me—yes, there it is!

DORA (*reads*).

'My dear Child,—I can do no more for you. I have done wrong in keeping your secret; your Father must be now in extreme old age. Go back to him and ask his forgiveness before he dies.—SISTER AGATHA.' Sister Agatha is right. Don't you long for Father's forgiveness?

EVA.

I would almost die to have it!

DORA.

And he may die before he gives it; may drop off any day, any hour. You must see him at once.

(*Rings bell. Enter* MILLY.) Milly, my dear, how did you leave Mr. Steer?

MILLY.

He's been a-moänin' and a-groänin' in 'is sleep, but I thinks he be wakkenin' oop.

DORA.

Tell him that I and the lady here wish to see him. You see she is lamed, and cannot go down to him.

MILLY.

Yeäs, Miss, I will. [*Exit* MILLY.

DORA.

I ought to prepare you. You must not expect to find our Father as he was five years ago. He is much altered; but I trust that your return—for you know, my dear, you were always his favourite—will give him, as they say, a new lease of life.

EVA (*clinging to* DORA).

Oh, Dora, Dora!

Enter STEER, *led by* MILLY.

STEER.

Hes the cow cawved?

DORA.

No, Father.

STEER.

Be the colt deäd?

DORA.

No, Father.

STEER.

He wur sa bellows'd out wi' the wind this murnin', 'at I tell'd 'em to gallop 'im. Be he deäd?

DORA.

Not that I know.

STEER.

What hasta sent fur me, then, fur?

DORA (*taking* STEER'S *arm*).

Well, Father, I have a surprise for you.

STEER.

I ha niver been surprised but once i' my life, and I went blind upon it.

DORA.

Eva has come home.

STEER.

Hoäm? fro' the bottom o' the river?

DORA.

No, Father, that was a mistake. She's here again.

STEER.

The Steers was all gentlefoälks i' the owd times, an' I worked early an' laäte to maäke 'em all gentlefoälks ageän. The land belonged to the Steers i' the owd times, an' it belongs to the Steers ageän: I bowt it back ageän; but I couldn't buy my darter back ageän when she lost hersen, could I? I eddicated boäth on em to marry gentlemen, an' one on 'em went an' lost hersen i' the river.

DORA.

No, father, she's here.

STEER.

Here! she moänt coom here. What would her mother saäy? If it be her ghoäst, we mun abide it. We can't keep a ghoäst out.

EVA (*falling at his feet*).

O forgive me! forgive me!

STEER.

Who said that? Taäke me awaäy, little gell. It be one o' my bad daäys. [*Exit* STEER *led by* MILLY.

DORA (*smoothing* EVA'S *forehead*).

Be not so cast down, my sweet Eva. You heard him say it was one of his bad days. He will be sure to know you to-morrow.

EVA.

It is almost the last of my bad days, I think. I am very faint. I must lie down. Give me your arm. Lead me back again.

[DORA *takes* EVA *into inner room.*

Enter MILLY.

MILLY.

Miss Dora! Miss Dora!

DORA (*returning and leaving the bedroom door ajar*).

Quiet! quiet! What is it?

MILLY.

Mr. 'Arold, Miss.

DORA.

Below?

MILLY.

Yeäs, Miss. He be saäyin' a word to the owd man, but he'll coom up if ye lets 'im.

DORA.

Tell him, then, that I'm waiting for him.

MILLY.

Yeäs, Miss.

[*Exit.* DORA *sits pensively and waits.*

Enter HAROLD.

HAROLD.

You are pale, my Dora! but the ruddiest cheek
That ever charm'd the plowman of your wolds
Might wish its rose a lily, could it look
But half as lovely. I was speaking with
Your father, asking his consent—you wish'd me—
That we should marry: he would answer nothing,
I could make nothing of him; but, my flower,
You look so weary and so worn! What is it
Has put you out of heart?

DORA.

It puts me in heart
Again to see you; but indeed the state
Of my poor father puts me out of heart.
Is yours yet living?

HAROLD.

No—I told you.

DORA.

When?

HAROLD.

Confusion!—Ah well, well! the state we all
Must come to in our spring-and-winter world
If we live long enough! and poor Steer looks
The very type of Age in a picture, bow'd
To the earth he came from, to the grave he goes to,
Beneath the burthen of years.

DORA.

More like the picture
Of Christian in my 'Pilgrim's Progress' here,
Bow'd to the dust beneath the burthen of sin.

HAROLD.

Sin! What sin?

DORA.

Not his own.

HAROLD.

That nursery-tale
Still read, then?

DORA.

Yes; our carters and our shepherds
Still find a comfort there.

HAROLD.

Carters and shepherds!

DORA.

Scorn! I hate scorn. A soul with no religion—
My mother used to say that such a one
Was without rudder, anchor, compass—might be
Blown everyway with every gust and wreck
On any rock; and tho' you are good and gentle,
Yet if thro' any want——

HAROLD.

Of this religion?
Child, read a little history, you will find
The common brotherhood of man has been
Wrong'd by the cruelties of his religions
More than could ever have happen'd thro' the want
Of any or all of them.

DORA.

—But, O dear friend,
If thro' the want of any—I mean the true one—
And pardon me for saying it—you should ever
Be tempted into doing what might seem
Not altogether worthy of you, I think
That I should break my heart, for you have taught me
To love you.

HAROLD.

What is this? some one been stirring
Against me? he, your rustic amourist,
The polish'd Damon of your pastoral here,
This Dobson of your idyll?

DORA.

No, Sir, no!
Did you not tell me he was crazed with jealousy,
Had threaten'd ev'n your life, and would say anything?
Did *I* not promise not to listen to him,
Not ev'n to see the man?

HAROLD.

Good; then what is it
That makes you talk so dolefully?

DORA.

I told you—
My father. Well, indeed, a friend just now,
One that has been much wrong'd, whose griefs are mine,
Was warning me that if a gentleman
Should wed a farmer's daughter, he would be
Sooner or later shamed of her among
The ladies, born his equals.

HAROLD.

More fool he!
What I that have been call'd a Socialist,
A Communist, a Nihilist—what you will!——

DORA.

What are all these?

HAROLD.

Utopian idiotcies.
They did not last three Junes. Such rampant weeds
Strangle each other, die, and make the soil
For Cæsars, Cromwells, and Napoleons
To root their power in. I have freed myself
From all such dreams, and some will say because
I have inherited my Uncle. Let them.

But—shamed of you, my Empress! I should prize
The pearl of Beauty, even if I found it
Dark with the soot of slums.

DORA.

But I can tell you,
We Steers are of old blood, tho' we be fallen.
See there our shield. (*Pointing to arms on mantelpiece.*)
For I have heard the Steers
Had land in Saxon times; and your own name
Of Harold sounds so English and so old
I am sure you must be proud of it.

HAROLD.

Not I!
As yet I scarcely feel it mine. I took it
For some three thousand acres. I have land now
And wealth, and lay both at your feet.

DORA.

And *what* was
Your name before?

HAROLD.

Come, come, my girl, enough
Of this strange talk. I love you and you me.
True, I have held opinions, hold some still,
Which you would scarce approve of: for all that,
I am a man not prone to jealousies,
Caprices, humours, moods; but very ready

To make allowances, and mighty slow
To feel offences. Nay, I do believe
I could forgive—well, almost anything—
And that more freely than your formal priest,
Because I know more fully than *he* can
What poor earthworms are all and each of us,
Here crawling in this boundless Nature. Dora,
If marriage ever brought a woman happiness
I doubt not I can make you happy.

DORA.

You make me
Happy already.

HAROLD.

And I never said
As much before to any woman living.

DORA.

No?

HAROLD.

No! by this true kiss, *you* are the first
I ever have loved truly. [*They kiss each other.*

EVA (*with a wild cry*).

Philip Edgar!

HAROLD.

The phantom cry! *You*—did *you* hear a cry?

DORA.

She must be crying out 'Edgar' in her sleep.

HAROLD.

Who must be crying out 'Edgar' in her sleep?

DORA.

Your pardon for a minute. She must be waked.

HAROLD

Who must be waked?

DORA.

I am not deaf: you fright me.
What ails you?

HAROLD.

Speak.

DORA.

You know her, Eva.

HAROLD.

Eva!

[EVA *opens the door and stands in the entry.*

She!

EVA.

Make her happy, then, and I forgive you.

[*Falls dead.*

DORA.

Happy! What? Edgar? Is it so? Can it be?
They told me so. Yes, yes! I see it all now.
O she has fainted. Sister, Eva, sister!
He is yours again—he will love *you* again;
I give him back to you again. Look up!
One word, or do but smile! Sweet, do you hear me?
[*Puts her hand on* EVA'S *heart.*
There, there—the heart, O God!—the poor young heart
Broken at last—all still—and nothing left
To live for. [*Falls on body of her sister.*

HAROLD.

Living . . . dead . . . She said 'all still.
Nothing to live for.'
She—she knows me—now . . .
(*A pause.*)
She knew me from the first, she juggled with me,
She hid this sister, told me she was dead—
I have wasted pity on her—not dead now—
No! acting, playing on me, both of them.
They drag the river for her! no, not they!
Playing on me—not dead now—a swoon—a scene—
Yet—how she made her wail as for the dead!

Enter MILLY.

MILLY.

Pleäse, Mister 'Arold.

HAROLD (*roughly*).

Well?

MILLY.

The owd man's coom'd ageän to 'issen, an' wants
To hev a word wi' ye about the marriage.

HAROLD.

The what?

MILLY.

The marriage.

HAROLD.

The marriage?

MILLY.

Yeäs, the marriage.
Granny says marriages be maäde i' 'eaven.

HAROLD.

She lies! They are made in Hell. Child, can't you see?
Tell them to fly for a doctor.

MILLY.

O law—yeäs, Sir!
I'll run fur 'im mysen. [*Exit.*

HAROLD.

All silent there,

Yes, deathlike! Dead? I dare not look: if dead,
Were it best to steal away, to spare myself,
And her too, pain, pain, pain?
My curse on all
This world of mud, on all its idiot gleams
Of pleasure, all the foul fatalities
That blast our natural passions into pains!

Enter DOBSON.

DOBSON.

You, Master Hedgar, Harold, or whativer
They calls ye, for I warrants that ye goäs
By haäfe a scoor o' naämes—out o' the chaumber.
[*Dragging him past the body.*

HAROLD.

Not that way, man! Curse on your brutal strength!
I cannot pass that way.

DOBSON.

Out o' the chaumber!
I'll mash tha into nowt.

HAROLD.

The mere wild-beast!

DOBSON.

Out o' the chaumber, dang tha!

HAROLD.

Lout, churl, clown!

[*While they are shouting and struggling* DORA *rises and comes between them.*

DORA (*to* DOBSON).

Peace, let him be: it is the chamber of Death!
Sir, you are tenfold more a gentleman,
A hundred times more worth a woman's love,
Than this, this—but I waste no words upon him:
His wickedness is like my wretchedness—
Beyond all language.

(*To* HAROLD.)

You—you see her there!
Only fifteen when first you came on her,
And then the sweetest flower of all the wolds,
So lovely in the promise of her May,
So winsome in her grace and gaiety,
So loved by all the village people here,
So happy in herself and in her home——

DOBSON (*agitated*).

Theer, theer! ha' done. I can't abeär to see her.

[*Exit.*

DORA.

A child, and all as trustful as a child!
Five years of shame and suffering broke the heart
That only beat for you; and he, the father,

Thro' that dishonour which you brought upon us,
Has lost his health, his eyesight, even his mind.

HAROLD (*covering his face*).

Enough!

DORA.

It seem'd so; only there was left
A second daughter, and to her you came
Veiling one sin to act another.

HAROLD.

No!
You wrong me there! hear, hear me! I wish'd, if
you—— [*Pauses.*

DORA.

If I——

HAROLD.

Could love me, could be brought to love me
As I loved you——

DORA.

What then?

HAROLD.

I wish'd, I hoped
To make, to make——

DORA.

What did you hope to make?

HAROLD.

'Twere best to make an end of my lost life.
O Dora, Dora!

DORA.

What did you hope to make?

HAROLD.

Make, make! I cannot find the word—forgive it—
Amends.

DORA.

For what? to whom?

HAROLD.

To him, to you!
[*Falling at her feet.*

DORA.

To *him!* to *me!*
No, not with all your wealth,
Your land, your life! Out in the fiercest storm
That ever made earth tremble—he, nor I—
The shelter of *your* roof—not for one moment—
Nothing from *you!*
Sunk in the deepest pit of pauperism,
Push'd from all doors as if we bore the plague,
Smitten with fever in the open field,
Laid famine-stricken at the gates of Death—
Nothing from you!

But she there—her last word
Forgave—and I forgive you. If you ever
Forgive yourself, you are even lower and baser
Than even I can well believe you. Go!

[*He lies at her feet. Curtain falls.*

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